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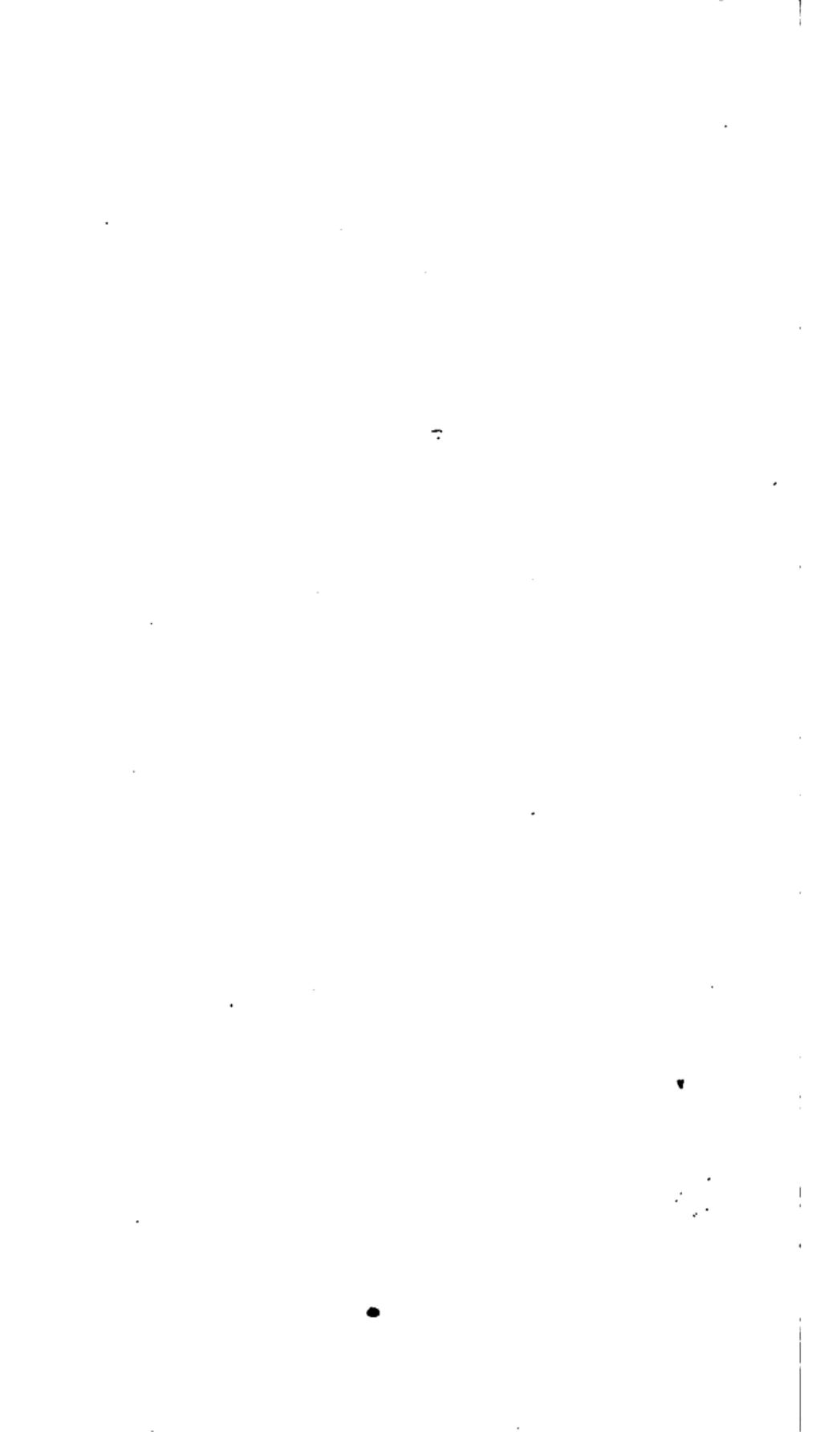
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170 Es mala
is Spanish expression which
the Duke of Alba was very fond
of employing and which very
modestly prevents me from taking
upon him whose meaning may be
discovered by consulting the
most private book of the private
life of Philip the Second.



Harper's Stereotype Edition.

PHILIP AUGUSTUS;

OR,

THE BROTHERS IN ARMS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'RICHELIEU,' 'DARNLEY,' 'DE LORME,' &c.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."—HENRY IV.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS
NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1836.

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ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. LL.D.

MY DEAR SIR,

WERE this book even a great deal better than an author's partiality for his literary offspring can make me believe, I should still have some hesitation in dedicating it to you, if the fact of your allowing me to do so implied any thing but your own kindness of heart. I think now, on reading it again, as I thought twelve months ago when I wrote it, that it is the best thing that I have yet composed ; but were it a thousand times better in every respect than any thing I ever have or ever shall produce, it would still, I am conscious, be very unworthy of your acceptance, and very inferior to what I could wish to offer.

Notwithstanding all your present fame, I am convinced that future years, by adding hourly to the reputation you have already acquired, will justify my feelings towards your work, and that your writings will be among the few—the very few—which each age in dying bequeaths to the thousand ages to come.

However, it is with no view of giving a borrowed lustre to my book that I distinguish this page by placing in it your name. Regard, esteem, and admiration are surely sufficient motives for seeking to offer you some tribute, and sufficient apology, though that tribute be very inferior to the wishes of,

My dear Sir,

Your very faithful servant,

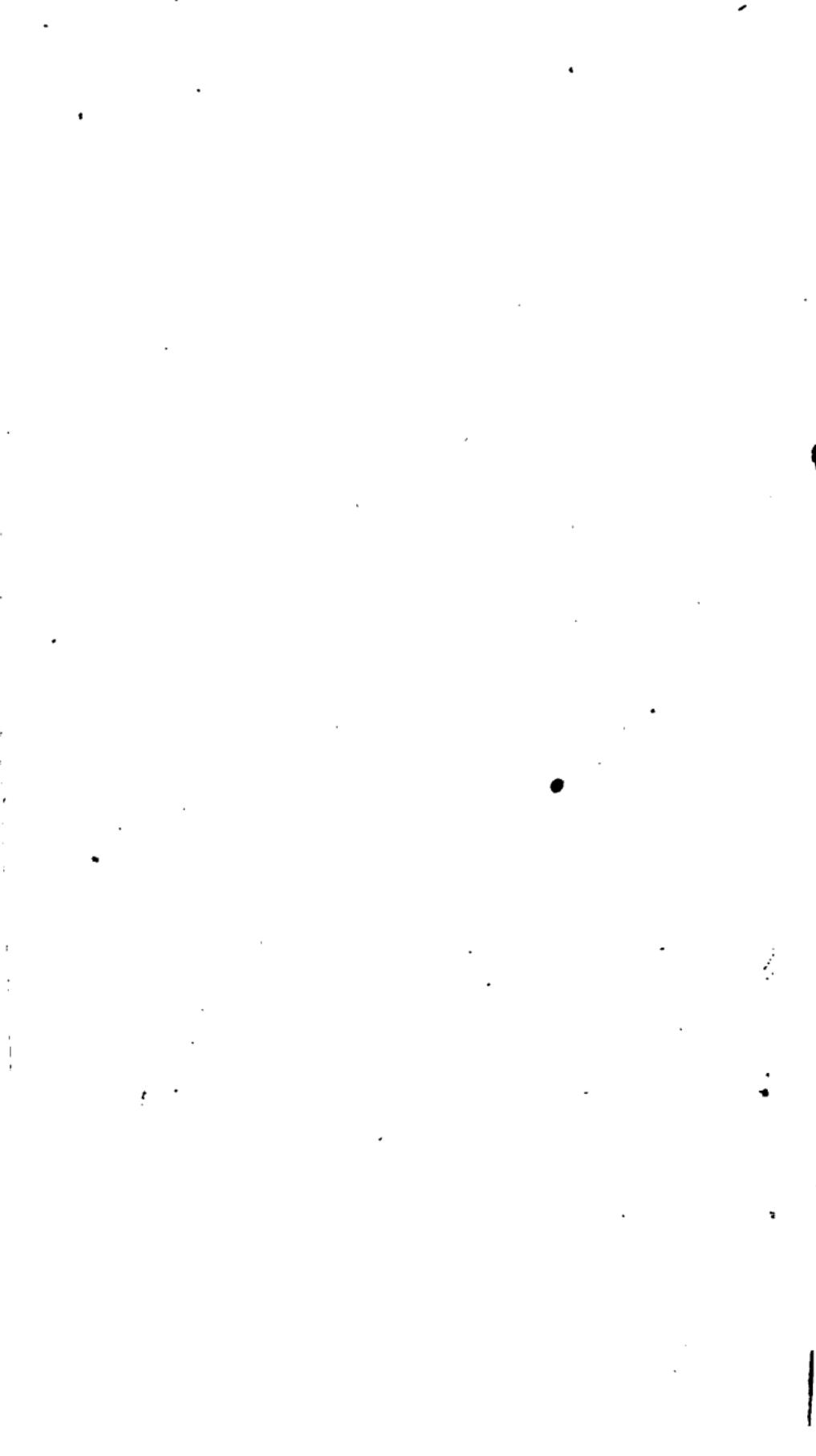
G. P. R. JAMES.

Maxpoffle, near Melrose, Roxburghshire,
25th May, 1831.



ADVERTISEMENT.

VERY few words of preface are necessary to the following work. In regard to the character of Philip Augustus himself, I have not been guided by any desire of making him appear greater, or better, or wiser than he really was. Rigord, his physician, William the Breton, his chaplain, who was present at the battle of Bovines, and various other annalists comprised in the excellent collection of memoirs published by Monsieur Guizot, have been my authorities. A different view has been taken of his life by several writers, inimical to him, either from belonging to some of the factions of those times, or to hostile countries ; but it is certain that all who came in close contact with Philip, loved the man and admired the monarch. All the principal events here narrated in regard to that monarch and his queen are historical facts, though brought within a shorter space of time than that which they really occupied. The sketch of King John, and the scenes in which he was unavoidably introduced, I have made as brief as possible, under the apprehension of putting my writings in comparison with something inimitably superior. The picture of the mischeivous idiot, Gallon the Fool, was taken from a character which fell under my notice for some time in the South of France.



PHILIP AUGUSTUS.

CHAPTER I.

NOTWITHSTANDING that there is something chilling in that sad, inevitable word, *the past*—notwithstanding that in looking through the thronged rolls of history, and reading of all the dead passions, the fruitless anxieties, the vain unproductive yearnings of beings that were once as full of thrilling life and feeling as ourselves,—and now are nothing ; notwithstanding that therein we gain but the cold moral of our own littleness, yet still the very indistinctness of the distance softens and beautifies the objects that we thus look back upon in a former epoch ; and in the far prospect of the days gone by, a thousand bright and glistening spots stand out, and catch the last most brilliant rays of a sun that has long set to the multitude of smaller things around them.

To none of these bright points does the light of history lend a more dazzling lustre than to the twelfth century, when the most brilliant institution of modern Europe, the feudal system, rose to its highest pitch of splendour ; when it incorporated with itself the noblest order that ever the enthusiasm of man (if not his wisdom) conceived,—the order of chivalry : and when it undertook an enterprise which, though fanatic in design, faulty in execution, and encumbered with all the multitude of frailties that enchain human endeavour, was in itself magnificent and heroic, and in its consequences grand, useful, and impulsive to the whole of Europe—the crusades.

The vast expenses, however, which the crusades required,—expenses not only of that yellow dross, the unprofitable representative of earth's real riches, but also expenses of invaluable time, of blood, of energy, of talent,—exhausted and enfeebled every Christian realm, and left in each the nerves of internal policy unstrung and weak, with a lassitude like that which, in the human frame, succeeds to any great and unaccustomed excitement.

Though through all Europe, in that day, the relationships of lord, vassal, and serf were the grand divisions of society, yet it was in France that the feudal system existed in its most perfect form, rising in gradual progression:—first, serfs, or villains; then, vavassors, or vassals holding of a vassal; then, vassals holding of a suzerain, yet possessing the right of high justice; then suzerains, great feudatories, holding of the king; and, lastly, the king himself, with smaller domains than many of his own vassals, but with a general though limited right and jurisdiction over them all. In a kingdom so constituted, the crusades, a true feudal enterprise, were, of course, followed to a degree of madness; and the effects were the more dreadful, where the absence of each lord implied absence of all government in his domains.

Unnumbered forests covered the face of France; or, rather, the whole country presented nothing but one great forest; scattered through which, occasional patches of cultivated land, rudely tilled by the serfs of glebe, sufficed for the support of a thin and diminished population. General police was unthought of; and though every feudal chief, within his own territory, exercised that sort of justice which to him seemed good—too little distinction existed between the character of robber and judge for us to suppose that the public benefited much by the tribunals of the barons. The forests, the mountains, and the moors swarmed with plunderers of every description; and besides the nobles themselves, who very frequently were professed robbers on the highway, three distinct classes of banditti existed in

France, who, though different in origin, in manners, and in object, yet agreed wonderfully in the general principle of pillaging all who were unable to protect themselves.

These three classes, the Brabançois, the Cotereaux, and the Routiers, have, from this general assimilating link, been very often confounded; and, indeed, on many occasions they are found to have changed name and profession when occasion served,—the same band having been at one moment Brabançois, and the next Cotereaux, wherever any advantage was to be gained by the difference of denomination; and also we find that they ever acted together as friends and allies, where any general danger threatened their whole community. The Brabançois, however, were originally very distinct from the Cotereaux, having sprung up from the various free companies which the necessities of the time obliged the monarchs of Europe to employ in their wars. Each vassal, by the feudal tenure, owed his sovereign but a short period of military service, and if personal interest or regard would sometimes lead them to prolong it, anger or jealousy would as often make them withdraw their aid at the moment it was most needful. Monarchs found that they must have men they could command, and the bands of adventurous soldiers known by the name of Brabançois were always found useful auxiliaries in any time of danger. As long as they were well paid, they were in general brave, orderly, and obedient: the moment their pay ceased, they dispersed under their several leaders, ravaged, pillaged, and consumed, levying on the country in general that pay which the limited finances of the sovereign always prevented him from continuing, except in time of absolute warfare. Still, however, even in their character of plunderers, they had the dignity of rank and chivalry, were often led by knights and nobles; and though in the army they joined the qualities of the mercenary and the robber to those of the soldier, in the forest and on the moor they often added somewhat of the frank generosity of the soldier to the rapacity of the freebooter.

The Cotereaux were different in origin,—at least, if we may trust Ducange,—springing at first from fugitive serfs, and the scattered remains of those various bands of revolted peasantry which, from time to time, had struggled ineffectually to shake off the oppressive tyranny of their feudal lords.

These joined together in troops of very uncertain numbers, from tens to thousands, levied a continual war upon the community they had abandoned—not, probably, that they acted upon any system, or were influenced by any one universal feeling, but the general love of plunder, and the absolute necessity of self-defence.

The Routier was the common robber, who either played his single stake, and hazarded life for life with any one he met, or banded with others, and shared the trade of the Coterel, with whom he was frequently confounded, and from whom, indeed, he hardly differed, except in origin.

While the forests and wilds of France were thus tenanted by men who preyed upon their fellows, the castles and the cities were inhabited by two races, united for the time as lord and serf, but both advancing rapidly to a point of separation: the lord at the very acme of his power, with no prospect on any side but decline; the burgher struggling already for freedom, and growing strong by association.

Tyrants ever, and often simple robbers, the feudal chieftains had lately received a touch of refinement, by their incorporation with the order of chivalry. Courtesy was joined to valour. Song burst forth, and gave a voice to fame. The lay of the troubadour bore the tidings of great actions from clime to clime, and was at once the knight's ambition and his reward; while the bitter satire of the sirvente, or the playful apostrophe of the fabliau, scourged all that was base and ungenerous, and held up the disloyal and uncourteous to the all-powerful corrective of public opinion.

Something still remains to be said upon the institution of chivalry; and I can give no better sketch of its

history than in the eloquent words of the commentator on St. Palaye.*

“ Towards the middle of the tenth century, some poor nobles, united by the necessity of legitimate defence, and startled by the excesses certain to follow the multiplicity of sovereign powers, took pity on the tears and misery of the people. Invoking God and St. George, they gave each other their hand, plighted themselves to the defence of the oppressed, and placed the weak under the protection of their sword. Simple in their dress, austere in their morals, humble after victory, and firm in misfortune, in a short time they won for themselves immense renown.

“ Popular gratitude, in its simple and credulous joy, fed itself with marvellous tales of their deeds of arms, exalted their valour, and united in its prayers its generous liberators with even the powers of Heaven. So natural is it for misfortune to deify those who bring it consolation.

“ In those old times, as power was a right, courage was of course a virtue. These men, to whom was given, in the end, the name of knights, carried their virtue to the highest degree. Cowardice was punished among them as an unpardonable crime; falsehood they held in horror; perfidy and breach of promise they branded with infamy; nor have the most celebrated legislators of antiquity any thing comparable to their statutes.

“ This league of warriors maintained itself for more than a century in all its pristine simplicity, because the circumstances amid which it rose changed but slowly; but when a great political and religious movement announced the revolution about to take place in the minds of men, then chivalry took a legal form, and a rank amid authorized institutions.

“ The crusades, and the emancipation of the cities which marked the apogee of the feudal government, are two events which most contributed to the destruction of chivalry. True it is, that then also it

* M. Charles Nodier.

found its greatest splendour ; but it lost its virtuous independence and its simplicity of manners.

“ Kings soon found all the benefit they might derive from an armed association which should hold a middle place between the crown and those too powerful vassals who usurped all its prerogatives. From that time, kings created knights, and bound them to the throne by all the forms used in feudal investiture. But the particular character of those distant times was the pride of privileges ; and the crown could not devise any, without the nobility arrogating to itself the same. Thus the possessors of the greater feoffs hastened to imitate their monarch. Not only did they create knights, but this title, dear in a nation’s gratitude, became their hereditary privilege. This invasion stopped not there ; lesser chiefs imitated their sovereigns, and chivalry, losing its ancient unity, became no more than an honourable distinction, the principles of which, however, had for long a happy influence upon the fate of the people.”

Such, then, was the position of France towards the end of the twelfth century. A monarch, with limited revenues and curtailed privileges ; a multitude of petty sovereigns, each despotic in his own territories ; a chivalrous and ardent nobility ; a population of serfs, just learning to dream of liberty ; a soil rich, but overgrown with forests, and almost abandoned to itself ; an immense body of the inhabitants living by rapine ; and a total want of police and of civil government.

The crusade against Saladin was over.—Richard Cœur de Lion was dead, and Constantinople had just fallen into the hands of a body of French knights, at the time this tale begins. At the same period, John Lackland held the sceptre of the English kings with a feeble hand, and a poor and dastardly spirit ; while Philip Augustus, with grand views, but a limited power, sat firmly on the throne of France ; and by the vigorous impulse of a great, though a passionate and singular mind, hurried forward his kingdom, and England along with it, towards days of greatness and civilization still remote.

CHAPTER II.

SEVEN hundred years ago, the same bright summer sun was shining in his glory that now rolls past before my eyes in all the beneficent majesty of light. It was the month of May, and every thing in nature seemed to breathe of the fresh buoyancy of youth. There was a light breeze in the sky, that carried many a swift shadow over mountain, plain, and wood. There was a springy vigour in the atmosphere, as if the wind itself were young. The earth was full of flowers, and the woods full of voice ; and song and perfume shared the air between them.

Such was the morning when a party of travellers took their way slowly up the south-eastern side of the famous Monts d'Or in Auvergne. The road, winding in and out through the immense forest which covered the base of the hills, now showed, now concealed the abrupt mountain-peaks starting out from their thick vesture of wood, and opposing their cold blue summits to the full blaze of the morning sun. Sometimes, turning round a sharp angle of the rock, the trees would break away and leave the eye full room to roam, past the forest hanging thick upon the edge of the slope, over valleys and hills, and plains beyond, to the far wanderings of the Allier through the distant country. Nor did the view end here ; for the plains themselves, lying like a map spread out below, skirted away to the very sky : and even there, a few faint blue shadows, piled up in the form of peaks and cones, left the mind uncertain whether the Alps themselves did not there bound the view, or whether some fantastic clouds did not combine with that bold traitor, Fancy, to deceive the eye.

At other times, the way seemed to plunge into the deepest recesses of the mountains, passing in the midst

of black detached rocks and tall columns of gray basalt, broken fragments of which lay scattered on either side ; while a thousand shrubs and flowers twined, as in mockery, over them ; and the protruding roots of the large ancient trees grasped the fallen prisms of the volcanic pillars, as if vaunting the pride of even vegetable life over the cold, dull, inanimate stone.

Here and there, too, would often rise up on each side high masses of the mountain, casting all in shadow between them ; while the bright yellow lights streaming amid the trees above, and decking the foliage as if with liquid gold, and the shining of the clear blue sky overhead, were the only signs of summer that reached the bottom of the ravine. Then again, breaking out upon a wide green slope, the path would emerge into the sunshine, and, passing even through the very dew of the cataract, would partake of the thousand colours of the sunbow that hung above its fall.

It was a scene and a morning like one of those days of unmixed happiness that sometimes shine in upon the path of youth—so few, and yet so beautiful. Its very wildness was lovely ; and the party of travellers who wound up the path added to the interest of the scene by redeeming it from perfect solitude, and linking it to social existence.

The manner of their advance, too, which partook the forms of a military procession, made the group in itself picturesque. A single squire, mounted on a strong bony horse, led the way at about fifty yards' distance from the rest of the party. He was a tall, powerful man, of a dark complexion and high features ; and from beneath his thick, arched eyebrow gazed out a full, brilliant, black eye, which roved incessantly over the scene, and seemed to notice the smallest object around. He was armed with cuirass and steel cap, sword and dagger ; and yet the different form and rude finishing of his arms did not admit of their being confounded with those of a knight. The two who next followed were evidently of a different grade ; and, though both young men, both wore a large cross pendent from their neck, and a small

branch of palm in the bonnet. The one who rode on the right-hand was armed at all points, except his head and arms, in plate armour,* curiously inlaid with gold in a thousand elegant and fanciful arabesques, the art of perfecting which is said to have been first discovered at Damascus. The want of his gauntlets and brassards showed his arms covered with a quilted jacket of crimson silk, called a gambeson, and large gloves of thick buff leather. The place of his casque was supplied by a large brown hood, cut into a long peak behind, which fell almost to his horse's back ; while the folds in front were drawn round a face which, without being strikingly handsome, was nevertheless noble and dignified in its expression, though clouded by a shade of melancholy which had channelled his cheek with many a deep line, and drawn his brow into a fixed but not a bitter frown.

In form he was, to all appearance, broad made and powerful ; but the steel plates in which he was clothed of course greatly concealed the exact proportions of his figure ; though withal there was a sort of easy grace in his carriage, which, almost approaching to negligence, was but the more conspicuous from the very stiffness of his armour. His features were aquiline, and had something in them that seemed to betoken quick and violent passions ; and yet such a supposition was at once contradicted by the calm, still melancholy of his large dark eyes.

The horse on which the knight rode was a tall, powerful German stallion, jet black in colour ; and though not near so strong as one which a squire led at a little distance behind, yet, being unencumbered with panoply itself, it was fully equal to the weight of its rider, armed as he was.

The crusader's companion—for the palm and cross

* I have seen it very ridiculously asserted in a critique on one of Sir Walter Scott's beautiful romances, that plate armour was not used at this particular period. The haubert hauberk, or vest of steel links, was very much used, it is true, but plate armour was no less in use. William the Breton, in his poem on Philip Augustus, speaks of one of his heroes wearing not only a cuirass, but a steel plastron under it. And he still further describes the various pieces of the arms of the Count de Boulogne, taken at the battle of Bouvines, giving the complete picture of a knight in plate armour.

betokened that they both returned from the Holy Land—formed as strong a contrast as can well be conceived to the horseman we have just described. He was a fair, handsome man, round whose broad high forehead curled a profusion of rich chestnut hair, which behind, having been suffered to grow to an extraordinary length, fell down in thick masses upon his shoulders. His eye was one of those long, full, gray eyes which, when fringed with very dark lashes, give a more thoughtful expression to the countenance than even those of a deeper hue; and such would have been the case with his, had not its clear powerful glance been continually at variance with a light, playful turn of his lip, that seemed full of sportive mockery.

His age might be four or five-and-twenty—perhaps more; for he was of that complexion that retains long the look of youth, and on which even cares and toils seem for years to spend themselves in vain:—and yet it was evident, from the bronzed ruddiness of what was originally a very fair complexion, that he had suffered long exposure to a burning sun; while a deep scar on one of his cheeks, though it did not disfigure him, told that he did not spare his person in the battle-field.

No age or land is of course without its foppery; and however inconsistent such a thing may appear, joined with the ideas of cold steel and mortal conflicts, no small touch of it was visible in the apparel of the younger horseman. His person, from the shoulders down to the middle of his thigh, was covered with a bright haubert, or shirt of steel rings, which, polished like glass, and lying flat upon each other, glittered and flashed in the sunshine as if they were formed of diamonds. On his head he wore a green velvet cap, which corresponded in colour with the edging of his gambeson, the puckered silk of which rose above the edge of the shirt-of-mail, and prevented the rings from chafing upon his neck. Over this hung a long mantle of fine cloth of a deep green hue, on the shoulder of which was embroidered a broad red cross, distinguishing the French crusader. The hood, which was long

and pointed, like his companion's, was thrown back from his face, and exposed a lining of miniver.

The horse he rode was a slight, beautiful Arabian, as white as snow in every part of his body, except where round his nostrils, and the tendons of his pastern and hoof, the white mellowed into a fine pale pink. To look at his slender limbs, and the bending, pliancy of every step, one would have judged him scarcely able to bear so tall and powerful a man as his rider, loaded with a covering of steel ; but the proud toss of his head, the snort of his wide nostril, and the flashing fire of his clear crystal eye, spoke worlds of unexhausted strength and spirit ; though the thick dust with which the whole party were covered evinced that their day's journey had already been long. Behind each knight, except where the narrowness of the road obliged them to change the order of their march, one of their squires led a battle-horse in his right hand ; and several others followed, bearing the various pieces of their offensive and defensive armour.

This, however, was to be remarked, that the arms of the first-mentioned horseman were distributed among a great many persons ; one carrying the casque upright on the pommel of the saddle, another bearing his shield and lance, another his brassards and gauntlets ; while the servants of the second knight, more scanty in number, were fain to take each upon himself a heavier load.

To these immediate attendants succeeded a party of simple grooms leading various other horses, among which were one or two Arabians ; and the whole cavalcade was terminated by a small body of archers.

For long, the two knights proceeded silently on their way, sometimes side by side, sometimes one preceding the other, as the road widened or diminished in its long tortuous way up the acclivity of the mountains, but still without exchanging a single word. The one whom—though there was probably little difference of age—we shall call the elder, seemed indeed too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts to desire, or even permit of con-

versation, and kept his eyes bent pensively forward on the road before, without even giving a glance to his companion, whose gaze roamed enchanted over all the exquisite scenery around, and whose mind seemed fully occupied in noting all the lovely objects he beheld. From time to time, indeed, his eye glanced to his brother knight, and a sort of sympathetic shade came over his brow, as he saw the deep gloom in which he was proceeding. Occasionally, too, a sort of movement of impatience seemed to agitate him, as if there was something that he fain would speak. But then the cold unexpecting fixedness of his companion's features appeared to repel it, and, turning again to the view, he more than once apparently suppressed what was rising to his lips, or only gave it vent in humming a few lines of some lay, or some sirvente, the words of which, however, were inaudible. At length it seemed to break through all restraint, and, drawing his rein, he made his horse pause for an instant, while he exclaimed—

“Is it possible, *beau Sire d’Auvergne*, that the sight of your own fair land cannot draw from you a word or a glance?” while, as he spoke, he made his horse bound forward again, and throwing his left hand over the whole splendid scene that the opening of the trees exposed to the sight, he seemed to bid it appeal to the heart of his companion, and upbraid him with his indifference.

The Count d’Auvergne raised his eyes, and let them rest for an instant on the view to which his companion pointed; then dropped them to his friend’s face, and replied calmly—

“Had any one told me, five years ago, that such would be the case, Guy de Coucy, I would have given him the lie.”

Guy de Coucy answered nothing directly, but took up his song again, saying—

“He who tells his sorrow, may find
That he sows but the seed of the empty wind:
But he who keeps it within his breast,
Nurses a serpent to gnaw his rest.”

" You sing truly, De Coucy, as I have proved too bitterly," replied the Count d'Auvergne ; " but since we have kept companionship together, I have ever found you gay and happy. Why should I trouble your repose with sorrows not your own ?"

" Good faith ! fair count, I understand you well," replied the other, laughing. " You would say that you have ever held me more merry than wise ; more fit to enliven a dull table, than listen to a sad tale ; a better companion in brawls or merrymaking, than in sorrows or solemnities ; and 'faith you are right, I love them not ; and therefore is it not the greatest proof of my friendship, when hating sorrows as much as man well may, I ask you to impart me yours ?"

" In truth, it is," answered the Count d'Auvergne ; " but yet I will not load your friendship so, De Coucy. Mine are heavy sorrows, which I would put upon no man's light heart. However, I have this day given way to them more than I should do ; but it is the very sight of my native land, beautiful and beloved as it is, which, waking in my breast the memory of hopes and joys passed away for ever, has made me less master of myself than I am wont."

" Fie now, fie !" cried his friend ; " Thibalt d'Auvergne, wouldest thou make me think the heart of a bold knight as fragile as the egg of a chaffinch, on which if but a cat sets her paw, it is broken never to be mended again ? Nay, nay ! there is consolation even in the heart of all evils ; like the honey that the good knight Sir Samson found in the jaws of the lion which he killed when he was out hunting with the king of the Saracens."

" You mean, when he was going down to the Philistines," said his friend, with a slight smile ; though such mistakes were nowise rare in those days ; and De Coucy spoke it in somewhat of a jesting tone, as if laughing himself at the ignorance he assumed.

" Be it so, be it so !" proceeded the other. " 'Tis all the same. But, as I said, there is consolation in every evil. Hast thou lost thy dearest friend in the battle-field ? Thank God ! that he died knightly in his har-

ness ! Hast thou pawned thy estate to the Jew ? Thank God ! that thou mayst curse him to thy heart's content in this world, and feel sure of his damnation hereafter ! " The count smiled ; and his friend proceeded, glad to see that he had won him even for a time from himself : " Has thy falcon strayed ? Say, 'twas a vile bird and a foul feeder, and call it a good loss. Has thy lady proved cold ? Has thy mistress betrayed thee ? Seek a warmer or a truer, and be happily deceived again."

The colour came and went in the cheek of the Count d'Auvergne ; and for an instant his eyes flashed fire ; but reading perfect unconsciousness of all offence in the clear open countenance of De Coucy, he bit his lip till his teeth left a deep white dent therein, but remained silent.

" Fie, fie ! D'Auvergne !" continued De Coucy, not noticing the emotion his words had produced. " Thou, a knight who hast laid more Saracen heads low than there are bells on your horse's poitrul, not able to unhorse so black a miscreant as Melancholy ! Thou, who hast knelt at the holy sepulchre," he added, in a more dignified tone, " not to find hope in faith, and comfort in the blessed Saviour for whose cross you've fought ! "

The count turned round, in some surprise at the unwonted vein which the last part of his companion's speech indicated ; but De Coucy kept to it but for a moment, and then, darting off, he proceeded in the same light way with which he had begun the conversation. " Melancholy !" he cried in a loud voice, at the same time taking off his glove, as if he would have cast it down as a gage of battle,— " Melancholy, and all that do abet him, Love, Jealousy, Hatred, Fear, Poverty, and the like, I do pronounce ye false miscreants, and defy you all ! There lays my glove !" and he made a show of throwing it on the ground.

" Ah, De Coucy !" said D'Auvergne, with a melancholy smile, " your light heart never knew what love is ; and may it never know ! "

"By the rood! you do me wrong," cried De Coucy—"bitter wrong, D'Auvergne! I defy you, in the whole lists of Europe's chivalry, to find a man who has been so often in love as I have—ay, and though you smile—with all the signs of true and profound love to boot. When I was in love with the Princess of Suabia, did not I sigh three times every morning, and sometimes sneeze as often? for it was winter weather, and I used to pass half my nights under her window. When I was in love with the daughter of Tancred of Sicily, did I not run seven courses for her, with all the best champions of England and France, in my silk gambeson, with no arms but my lance in my hand, and my buckler on my arm? When I was in love with the pretty Marchioness of Syracuse, did not I ride a mare one whole day, without ever knowing it, from pure absence of mind and profound love?—and when I was in love with all the ladies of Cyprus, did not I sing lays and write sirventes for them all?"

"Your fighting in your hoqueton," replied D'Auvergne, "showed that you were utterly fearless; and your riding on a mare showed that you were utterly whimsical; but neither one nor the other showed you were in love, my dear De Coucy. But look, De Coucy! the road bends downwards into that valley. Either I have strangely forgotten my native land, or your surly squire has led us wrong, and we are turning away from the Puy to the valleys of Dome.—Ho, sirrah!" he continued, elevating his voice and addressing the squire who rode first, "Are you sure you are right?"

"Neither Cotereaux, nor Brabançois, nor Routiers, nor living creatures of any kind see I, to the right or left, *beau Sire*," replied the squire, in a measured man-at-arms-like tone, without either turning his head or slackening his pace in the least degree.

"But art thou leading us on the right road? I ask thee," repeated the count.

"I know not, *beau Sire*," replied the squire. "I was thrown out to guard against danger,—I had no commands to seek the right road." And he continued

to ride on the wrong way as calmly as if no question existed in respect to its direction."

"Halt!" cried De Coucy. The man-at-arms stood still; and a short council was held between the two knights in regard to their farther proceedings, when it was determined that they should still continue for some way on the same road, rather than turn back after so long a journey. "We must come to some château or some habitation soon," said De Coucy; "or, at the worst, find some of your country shepherds to guide us on towards the chapel. But, methinks, Hugo de Barre, you might have told us sooner that you did not know the way!"

"Now, good Sir Knight," replied the squire, speaking more freely when addressed by his own lord, "none knew better than yourself that I had never been in Auvergne in all my days before. Did you ever hear of my quitting my cot and my glebe, except to follow my good lord the baron, your late father, for a forty days' *chevauchée* against the enemy, before I took the blessed cross, and went a fool's errand to the Holy Land?"

"How now, sir!" cried De Coucy. "Do you call the holy crusade a fool's errand? Be silent, Hugo, and lead on. Thou art a good scout and a good soldier, and that is all thou art fit for."

The squire replied nothing; but rode on in silence, instantly resuming his habit of glancing his eye rapidly over every object that surrounded him, with a scrupulous accuracy that left scarce a possibility of ambuscade. The knights and their train followed; and turning round a projecting part of the mountain, they found that the road, instead of descending, as they had imagined, continued to climb the steep; which at every step gained some new feature of grandeur and singularity, till the sublime became almost the terrific. The verdure gradually ceased, and the rocks approached so close on each side as to leave no more space than just sufficient for the road, and a narrow deep ravine by its side, at the bottom of which, wherever the thick bushes permitted the eye to reach it, the mountain torrent was

seen dashing and roaring over enormous blocks of black lava, which it had channelled into all strange shapes and appearances. High above the heads of the travellers, also, rose on either hand a range of enormous basaltic columns, fringed at the top by some dark old pines that, hanging seventy or eighty feet in the air, seemed to form a frieze to the gigantic colonnade through which they passed.

De Coucy looked up with a smile, not unmixed with awe. "Could you not fancy, D'Auvergne," he said, "that we were entering the portico of a temple built by some bad enchanter to the evil spirit? By the holy rood! it is a grand and awful scene! I did not think thy Auvergne was so magnificent."

As he spoke, the squire who preceded them suddenly stopped, and, turning round—

"The road ends here, *beau Sire*," he cried. "The bridge is broken, and there is no further passage."

"Light of my eyes!" cried De Coucy; "this is unfortunate! But let us see, at all events, before we turn back;" and, riding forward, he approached the spot where his squire stood.

It was even as he had said, however. All farther progress in a direct line was stopped by an immense mass of lava, which had probably lain there for im-memorial centuries. Certainly, when the road was made, which was probably in the days of the Romans, the same obstruction had existed; for, instead of attempting to continue the way along the side of the hill any further in that direction, a single arch had been thrown over the narrow ravine, and the road carried on through a wide breach in the rocks on the other side. This opening, however, offered nothing to the eye of De Coucy and his companions but a vacant space, backed by the clear blue sky. The travellers paused, and gazed upon the broken bridge and the road beyond for a minute or two, before turning back, with that sort of silent pause which generally precedes the act of yielding to some disagreeable necessity. However, after a moment, the younger knight beck-

oned to one of his squires, crying, " Give me my casque and sword !"

" Now, in the name of Heaven ! what Orlando trick are you going to put in practice, De Coucy ?" cried the Count d'Auvergne, watching his companion take his helmet from the squire, and buckle on his long straight sword by his side. " Are you going to cleave that rock of lava, or bridge over the ravine with your shield ?"

" Neither," replied the knight, with a smile ; " but I hear voices, brought by the wind through that cleft on the other side, and I am going over to ask the way."

" De Coucy, you are mad !" cried the count. " Your courage is insanity. Neither man nor horse can take that leap !"

" Pshaw ! you know not what Zerbilin can do !" said De Coucy, calmly patting the arching neck of his slight Arabian horse : " and yet you have yourself seen him take greater leaps than that !"

" But see you not the road slopes upwards ?" urged the count. " There is no hold for his feet. The horse is weary."

" Weary !" exclaimed De Coucy : " nonsense ! Give me space—give me space !"

And, in spite of all remonstrance, he reined his horse back, and then spurred him on to the leap. The obedient animal galloped onward to the brink, shot forward like an arrow, and reached the other side. But what the Count d'Auvergne had said was just. The road beyond sloped upwards from the very edge, and was composed of loose volcanic scoria, which afforded no firm footing ; so that the horse, though he accomplished the leap, slipped backwards the moment he had reached the opposite side, and rolled with his rider down into the ravine below !

" Jesu Maria !" cried the count, springing to the ground, and advancing to the edge of the ravine. " De Coucy ! De Coucy !" cried he, " are you in life ?"

"Yes, yes!" answered a faint voice from below; "and Zerbilin is not hurt!"

"But yourself, De Coucy!" cried his friend.—"speak of yourself!"

A groan was the only reply.

CHAPTER III.

It was in vain that the Count d'Auvergne gazed down into the ravine, endeavouring to gain a sight of his rash friend. A mass of shrubs overhung the shelving edge of the rock and totally intercepted his view. In the mean while, however, Hugo de Barre, the squire who had led the cavalcade, had sprung to the ground, and was already half-way over the brink attempting to descend to his lord's assistance, when a deep voice from the bottom of the dell exclaimed, "Hold! hold above! Try not to come down there. You will bring the rocks and loose stones upon our heads and kill us all."

"Who is it speaks?" cried the Count d'Auvergne.

"One of the hermits of our lady's chapel of the Mont d'Or," replied the voice. "If ye be this knight's friends, go back for a thousand paces, and ye will find a path down to the left, which leads to the road by the stream. But if ye be enemies, who have driven him to the dreadful leap he has taken, get ye hence, for he is even now at the foot of the cross."

The Count d'Auvergne, without staying to reply, rode back as the hermit directed, and easily found the path which they had before passed, but which, as it apparently led in a different direction from that in which they wished to proceed, they had hardly noticed at the time. Following this, they soon reached the bottom of the ravine, where they found a good road, jammed in, as it were, between the rocks over which they had passed, and the small mountain-stream they had ob-

served from above. For some way the windings of the dell and the various projections of the crags prevented them from seeing for any distance in advance; but at length they came suddenly upon a group of several persons, mounted and dismounted, both male and female, gathered round De Coucy's beautiful Arabian, Zerbilin, who stood in the midst, soiled and scratched indeed, and trembling with the fright and exertion of his fall, but almost totally uninjured, and filling the air with his long wild neighings. The group by which he was surrounded consisted entirely of the attendants of some persons not present, squires and varlets in very gay attire; and female servants and waiting-women, not a bit behindhand in flutter and finery. A beautiful Spanish jennet, such as any fair lady might love to ride, stood near, held by one of those old squires who, in that age, cruelly monopolized the privilege of assisting their lady to mount and dismount, much to the disappointment of many a young page and squire, who would willingly have relieved them of the task, especially when the lady in question was young and fair. Not far off was placed a strong but ancient horse, waiting for some other person, who was absent with the lady of the jennet.

Above the heads of this group, half-way up the face of the rock, stood a large cross elevated on a projecting mass of stone, and behind it appeared the mouth of a cavern, or rather of an excavation, from which had been drawn the blocks of lava to form the bridge we have mentioned, now fallen from its "high estate," and encumbering the bed of the river. It was easy to perceive the figures of several persons moving to and fro in the cave, and concluding at once that it was thither his unfortunate friend had been borne, the Count d'Auvergne sprang to the ground, and passing through the group of pages and waiting-women, who gazed upon him and his archers with some alarm, he made his way up the little path that led to the mouth of the cave. Here he found De Coucy stretched upon a bed of dry rushes, while a tall, emaciated old man, covered with a brown frock, and ornamented with a long white beard, stood

by his side, holding his hand. Between his fingers the hermit held a lancet; and from the strong muscular arm of the knight a stream of blood was just beginning to flow into a small wooden bowl held by a page.

Several other persons, however, filled the hermit's cave, of whom two are worthy of more particular notice. The first was a short, stout old man, with a complexion that argued florid health and vigour, and a small, keen gray eye, the quick movement of which, with a sudden curl of the lip and knit of the brow on every slight occasion of contradiction, might well bespeak a quick and impatient disposition. The second was a young lady of perhaps nineteen or twenty, slight in figure, but yet with every limb rounded in the full and swelling contour of woman's most lovely age. Her features were small, delicate, and nowhere sharp, yet cut with that square exactness of outline so beautiful in the efforts of the Grecian chisel. Her eyes were long, and full, and dark; and the black lashes that fringed them, as she gazed earnestly on the figure of De Coucy, swept downward and lay upon her cheek. The hair, that fell in a profusion of thick curls round her face, was as black as jet; and yet her skin, though of that peculiar tint almost inseparable from dark hair and eyes, was strikingly fair, and as smooth as alabaster; while a faint but very beautiful colour spread over each cheek, and died away into the clear pure white of her temples.

In those days, when love was a duty, and coldness a dishonour, on the part of all who enjoyed or aspired to chivalry, no false delicacies, no fear of compromising herself, none of the mighty considerations of small proprieties that now-a-days hamper all the feelings, and enchain all the frankness of the female heart, weighed on the lady of the thirteenth century. It was her duty to feel and to express an interest in every good knight in danger and misfortune; and the fair being we have just described, before the eyes of her father, who looked upon her with honourable pride, knelt by the side of De Coucy; and while the hermit held the arm from which the blood was just beginning

to flow, she kept the small fingers of her soft white hand upon the other sinewy wrist of the insensible knight, and anxiously watched the returning animation.

While the Count d'Auvergne entered the cave in silence, and placed himself beside the hermit, De Coucy's squire, Hugo de Barre, with one of the pages, both devotedly attached to their young lord, had climbed up also, and stood at the mouth of the cavern.

"God's life! Hugo," cried the page, "let them not take my lord's blood. We have got among traitors. They are killing him."

"Peace, fool!" answered Hugo; "'tis a part of leechcraft. Did you never see Fulk, the barber, bleed the old baron? Why, he had it done every week. The De Coucys have more blood than other men."

The page was silent for a moment, and then replied in an under-tone, for there was a sort of contagious stillness round the hurt knight. "You had better look to it, Hugo. They are bleeding my lord too much. That hermit means him harm. See how he stares at the great carbuncle in Sir Guy's thumb-ring! He's murdering my lord to steal it. Shall I put my dagger in him?"

"Hold thy silly prate, Ermold de Marcy!" replied the squire: "think you, the good count would stand by and see his sworn brother in arms bled, without it was for his good? See you now, Sir Guy wakes!—God's benison on you, Sir Hermit!"

De Coucy did indeed open his eyes, and looked round, though but faintly. "D'Auvergne," said he, the moment after, while the playful smile fluttered again round his lips, "by the rood! I had nearly leaped further than I intended, and taken Zerbilin with me into Paradise. Thanks, hermit!—thanks, gentle lady!—I can rise now. Ho! Hugo, lend me thy hand."

But the hermit gently put his hand upon the knight's breast, saying, in a tone more resembling cynical bitterness than Christian mildness, "Hold, my son! This world is not the sweetest of dwelling-places; but if

thou wouldest not change it for a small, cold, comfortable grave, lie still. You shall be carried up to the Chapel of Our Lady, by the lake, where there is more space than in this cave ; and there I will find means to heal your bruises in two days, if your quick spirit may be quiet for so long."

As he spoke, he stopped the bleeding, and bound up the arm of the knight, who, finding probably even by the slight exertion he had made, that he was in no fit state to act for himself, submitted quietly, merely giving a glance to the Count d'Auvergne, half-rueful, half-smiling, as if he would fain have laughed at himself and his own helplessness, if the pain of his bruises would have let him.

"I prithee, holy father hermit, tell me," said the Count d'Auvergne, "is the hurt of this good knight dangerous ? for if it be, we will send to Mont Ferrand for some skilful leech from my uncle's castle—and instantly."

"His body is sufficiently bruised, my son," replied the hermit, "to give him, I hope, a sounder mind for the future, than to leap his horse down a precipice : and as for the leech, let him stay at Mont Ferrand. The knight is bad enough without his help, if he come to make him worse ; and if he come to cure him, I can do that without his aid. Leechcraft is as much worse than ignorance, as killing is worse than letting die."

"By my faith and my knighthood," cried the old gentleman, who stood at De Coucy's feet, and who, during the count's question and the hermit's somewhat ungracious reply, had been gazing at D'Auvergne with various looks of recognition—"by my faith and my knighthood ! I believe it is the Count Thibalt—though my eyes are none of the clearest, and it is long since—but, yes ! it is surely—Count Thibalt d'Auvergne."

"The same, *beau Sire*," replied D'Auvergne ; "my memory is less true than yours, or I see my father's old arms-fellow, Count Julian of the Mount."

"E'en so, fair sir !—e'en so !" replied the old man : .

“I and my daughter Isadore are even now upon our way to Vic le Comte to pass some short space with the good count, your father. A long and weary journey have we had hither, all the way from Flanders; and for our safe arrival we go to offer at the Chapel of Our Lady of St. Pavin of the Mount d’Or, ere we proceed to taste your castle’s hospitality. Good faith! you may well judge ‘tis matter of deep import brings me so far. Affairs of policy, young sir—affairs of policy,” he added, in a low and consequential voice. “Doubtless your father may have hinted—”

“For five long years, fair sir, I have not seen my father’s face,” replied D’Auvergne. “By the cross I bear, you may see where I have sojourned; and De Coucy and myself were but now going to lay our palms upon the altar of Our Lady of St. Pavin (according to a holy vow we made at Rome), prior to turning our steps towards our château also. Let us all on together then—I see the holy hermit has commanded the varlets to make a litter for my hurt friend; and after having paid our vows, we will back to Vic le Comte, and honour your arrival with wine and music.”

While this conversation passed between D’Auvergne and the old knight, De Coucy’s eyes had sought out more particularly the fair girl who had been kneeling by his side, and he addressed to her much and manifold thanks for her gentle tending,—in so low a tone, however, that it obliged her to stoop over him in order to hear what he said. De Coucy, as he had before professed to the Count d’Auvergne, had often tasted love, such as it was; and had ever been a bold wooer; but in the present instance, though he felt very sure and intimately convinced, that the eyes which now looked upon him were brighter than ever he had seen, and the lips that spoke to him were fuller, and softer, and sweeter, than ever had moved in his eyesight before, yet his stock of gallant speeches failed him strangely and he found some difficulty even in thanking the lady as he could have wished. At all events, so lame he thought the expression of those thanks, that he

endeavoured to make up for it by reiteration,—and repeated them so often, that at length the lady gently imposed silence upon him, lest his speaking might retard his cure.

The secrets of a lady's breast are a sort of forbidden fruit, which we shall not be bold enough to touch ; and therefore, whatever the fair Isadore might think of De Coucy—whatever touch of tenderness might mingle with her pity—whatever noble and knightly qualities she might see, or fancy, on his broad, clear brow, and bland, full lip—we shall not even stretch our hand towards the tree of knowledge, far less offer the fruit thereof to any one else. Overt acts, however, of all kinds are common property ; and therefore it is no violation of confidence, or of any thing else, to say that something in the tone and manner of the young knight made the soft crimson grow a shade deeper in the cheek of Isadore of the Mount ; and when the litter was prepared, and De Coucy placed thereon, though she proceeded very indifferently to mount her light jennet, and follow the cavalcade, she twice turned round to give a quick and anxious look towards the litter, as it was borne down the narrow and slippery path from the cave.

Although only what passed between De Coucy and the lady has been particularly mentioned here, it is not to be thence inferred that all the other personages who were present stood idly looking on—that the Count d'Auvergne took no heed of his hurt friend—that Sir Julian of the Mount forgot his daughter, or that the attendants of the young knight were unmindful of their master. Some busied themselves in preparing the litter of boughs and bucklers—some spread cloaks and furred aumuees upon it to make it soft—and some took care that the haubert, headpiece, and sword of which De Coucy had been divested should not be left behind in the cave.

In the mean while, Sir Julian of the Mount pointed out his daughter to the Count Thibalt d'Auvergne, boasted her skill in leechcraft, and her many other estimable

qualities, and assured him that he might safely intrust the care of De Coucy's recovery to her.

The Count d'Auvergne's eye fell coldly upon her, and ran over every exquisite line of loveliness, as she stood by the young knight, unconscious of his gaze, without evincing one spark of that gallant enthusiasm which the sight of beauty generally called up in the chivalrous bosoms of the thirteenth century. It was a cold, steady, melancholy gaze—and yet it ended with a sigh. The only compliment he could force his lips to form went to express that his friend was happy in having fallen into such fair and skilful hands ; and, this said, he proceeded to the side of the litter, which, borne by six of the attendants, was now carried down to the bank of the stream, and thence along the road that, winding onward through the narrow gorge, passed under the broken bridge, and gradually climbed to the higher parts of the mountain.

The general cavalcade followed as they might ; for the scantiness of the path, which grew less and less as it proceeded, prevented the possibility of any regularity in their march. At length, however, the gorge widened out into a small basin of about five hundred yards in diameter, around which the hills sloped up on every side, forming the shape of a funnel. Over one edge thereof poured a small but beautiful cascade, starting from mass to mass of volcanic rock, whose decomposition offered a thousand bright and singular hues, amid which the white and flashing waters of the stream agitated themselves with a strange but picturesque effect.

At the bottom of the cascade was a group of shepherds' huts ; and as it was impossible for the horses to proceed further, it was determined to leave the principal part of the attendants also there, to wait the return of the party from the chapel, which was, of course, to take place as soon as De Coucy had recovered from his bruises.

Some difficulty occurred in carrying the litter over the steeper part of the mountain, but at length it was

accomplished ; and, skirting round part of a large ancient forest, the pilgrims came suddenly on the banks of that most beautiful and extraordinary effort of nature, the *Lac Pavin*. Before their eyes extended a vast sheet of water, the crystal pureness of which mocks all description,—enclosed within a basin of verdure, the sides of which, nearly a hundred and fifty feet in height, rise from the banks of the lake with so precipitous an elevation, that no footing, however firm, can there keep its hold. For the space of a league and a half, which the lake occupies, this beautiful green border, with very little variation in its height, may still be seen following the limpid line of the water into which it dips itself, clear, and at once, without rush, or ooze, or water-plant of any description, to break the union of the soft turf and the pure wave.

Towards the south and east, however, extends, even now, an immense mass of dark and sombre wood, which, skirting down the precipitate bank, seems to contemplate its own majesty in the clear mirror of the lake. At the same time, all around, rise up a giant family of mountain peaks, that, each standing out abrupt and single in the sunny air, seem frowning on the traveller that invades their solitude.

Here, in the days of Philip Augustus, stood a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, called Our Lady of St. Pavin ; and many a miraculous cure is said to have been operated by the holy relics of the shrine, which caused Our Lady of St. Pavin to be the favourite saint of many of the chief families in France. By the side of the chapel was placed a congregation of small huts or cells, both for the accommodation of the various pilgrims who came to visit the shrine, and for the dwelling of three holy hermits, one of whom served the altar as a priest, while the other two retained the more amphibious character of simple recluse, bound by no vows but such as they chose to impose upon themselves.

At these huts the travellers now paused ; and after De Coucy had been carried into one of the huts, the hermit who had guided them thither demanded of

the Count d'Auvergne whether any of his train could draw a good bow, and wing a shaft well home.

“They are all archers, good hermit,” replied D’Auvergne: “see you not their bows and quivers?”

“Many a man wears a sword that cannot use it,” replied the hermit in the cynical tone which seemed natural to him. “Here, your very friend, whom God himself has armed with eyes and ears, and even understanding, such as it is, does he make use of any when he gallops down a precipice, where he would surely have been killed, had it not been for the aid and protection of a merciful Heaven, and a few stunted hazles? Your archers may make as good use of their bows as he does of his brains,—and then what serves their archery? But, however, choose out the best marksman; bid him go up to yonder peak, and take two well-feathered arrows with him: he will shoot no more! Then send all the rest to beat the valley to the right, with loud cries; the izzards will instantly take to the heights. Let your archer choose as they pass, and deliver me his arrows into the two fattest (though, God knows! ‘tis a crying sin to slay two wise beasts to save one foolish man); but let your vassal stay to make no *curée*, but bring the beasts down here while the life-heat is still in them. Your friend, wrapped in the fresh-flayed hides,—and to-morrow he shall be whole as if he had never played the fool!”

“I have seen it done at Byzantium,” replied D’Auvergne, “when a good knight of Flanders was hurled down from the south tower. It had a marvellous effect:—we will about it instantly.”

Accordingly, two of the izzards, which were then common in Auvergne, were soon slain in the manner the hermit directed; and De Coucy, notwithstanding no small dislike to the remedy, was stripped, and wrapped in the reeking hides; after which, stretched upon a bed of dry moss belonging to one of the hermits, he endeavoured to amuse himself with thoughts of love and battles, while the rest went to pay their vows at the shrine of Our Lady of St. Pavin.

De Coucy's mind soon wandered through all the battles, and tournaments, and passes of arms that could possibly be fought ; and then his fancy, by what was in those days a very natural digression, turned to love — and he thought of all the thousand ladies he had loved in his life ; and, upon recollecting all the separate charms of each, he found that they were all very beautiful. He could not deny it ; but yet, certainly, beyond all doubt, the fair Isadore of the Mount, with her dark, dark eyes, and her clear, bland brow, and her mouth such as angels smile with, was far more beautiful than any of them.

But still De Coucy asked himself why he could not tell her so ? He had never found it difficult to tell any one they were beautiful before ; or to declare that he loved them ; or to ask them for a glove, or a bracelet, or a token, to fix on his helm, and be his second in the battle ; but now, he felt sure that he had stammered like a schoolboy, and spoken below his voice like a young squire to an old knight. So De Coucy concluded from all these symptoms, that he could not be in love ; and fully convinced thereof, he very naturally fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

We must now change the scene, and, leaving wilds and mountains, come to a more busy though still a rural view. From the small narrow windows of the ancient château of Compiègne might be seen, on the one side, the forest with its ocean of green and waving boughs ; and on the other, a lively little town on the banks of the Oise, the windings of which river could be traced from the higher towers, far beyond its junction with the Aisne, into the distant country. Yet, notwithstanding that it was a town, Compiègne scarcely detracted from the

rural aspect of the picture. It had, even in those days, its gardens and its fruit-trees, which gave it an air of verdure, and blotted it, as it were, insensibly with the forest, that waved against its very walls. The green thatches, too, of its houses, in which slate or tile was unknown, covered with moss, and lichens, and flowering houseleek, offered not the cold stiff uniformity of modern roofs ; and the eye that looked down upon those constructions of art in its earliest and rudest form found all the picturesque irregularity of nature.

Gazing, then, from one of the narrow windows of a large square chamber in the keep of the château, were two beings who seemed to be enjoying to the full those bright hours of early affection, which are the summer days of existence, yielding flowers, and warmth, and sunshine, and splendour ;—hours that are so seldom known ;—hours that so often pass away like dreams ;—hours which are such strangers in courts, that, when they do intrude with their warm rays into the cold precincts of a palace, history marks their coming as a phenomenon, too often followed by a storm.

Alone, in the solitude of that large chamber, those two beings were as if in a world by themselves. The fair girl, seemingly scarce nineteen years of age, with her light hair floating upon her shoulders in large masses of shining curls, leaned her cheek upon her hand, and gazing with her full, soft blue eyes over the far-extended landscape, appeared lost in thought ; while her other hand, fondly clasped in that of her companion, shadowed out, as it were, how nearly linked he was, to her seemingly abstracted thoughts.

The other tenant of that chamber was a man of thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, tall, well-formed, handsome, of the same fair complexion as his companion, but tinged with the manly florid hue of robust health, exposure, and exercise. His nose was slightly aquiline, his chin rounded and rather prominent, and his blue eyes would have been fine and expressive, had they not been rather nearer together than the just proportion, and stained, as it were, on the very iris, by

some hazel spots in the midst of the blue. The effect, however, of the whole was pleasing ; and the very defect of the eyes, by its singularity, gave something fine and distinguished to the countenance ; while their nearness, joined with the fire that shone out in their glance, seemed to speak that keen and quick sagacity which sees and determines at once in the midst of thick dangers and perplexity.

The expression, however, of those eyes was now calm and soft, while sometimes holding her hand in his, sometimes playing with a crown of wild-roses he had put on his companion's head, he mingled one rich curl after another with the green leaves and the blushing flowers ; and, leaning with his left arm against the embrasure of the window, high above her head, as she sat gazing out upon the landscape, he looked down upon the beautiful creature, through the mazes of whose hair his other hand was straying, with a smile strangely mingled of affection for her, and mockery of his own light employment.

There was grace, and repose, and dignity in his whole figure ; and the simple green hunting tunic which he wore, without robe, or hood, or ornament whatever, served better to show its easy majesty, than would the robes of a king ; and yet this was Philip Augustus.

“ So pensive, sweet Agnes !” said he, after a moment's silence, thus waking from her reverie the lovely Agnes de Meranie, whom he had married shortly after the sycophant bishops of France had pronounced the nullity of his unconsummated marriage with Ingerburge,* for whom he had conceived the most inexplicable aversion :—“ So pensive !” he said. “ Where did those sweet thoughts wander ?”

“ Far, far, my Philip !” replied the queen, leaning

* Philip Augustus, after the death of his first wife, being still a very young man, married Ingerburge, sister of Canute, King of Denmark ; but on her arrival in France, he was seized with so strong a personal dislike to her, that he instantly convoked a synod of the clergy of France, who, on pretence of kindred of the prohibited degrees, annulled the marriage. Philip afterward married the beautiful Agnes, or Mary, as she is called by some, daughter of the Duke of Austria and Meranie, at present the Tyrol.—See Rigord Guill. Brit. Lit. H. Cart. Philip II. &c.

back her head upon his arm, and gazing up in his face with a look of that profound, unutterable affection which sometimes dwells in woman's heart for her first and only love:—"far from this castle and this court;—far from Philip's splendid chivalry, and his broad realms, and his fair cities; and yet with Philip still. I thought of my own father, and all his tenderness and love for me; and of my own sweet Istria! and I thought how hard was the fate of princes, that some duty always separated them from some of those they love, and—"

"And doubtless you wished to quit your Philip for those that you loved better," interrupted the king, with a smile at the very charge which he well knew would soon be contradicted.

"Oh, no! no!" replied Agnes; "but, as I looked out yonder, and thought it was the way to Istria, I wished that my Philip was but a simple knight, and I an humble demoiselle. Then should he mount his horse, and I would spring upon my palfrey; and we would ride gayly back to my native land, and see my father once again, and live happily with those we loved."

"But tell me, Agnes," said Philip, with a tone of melancholy that struck her, "if you were told, that you might to-morrow quit me, and return to your father and your own fair land, would you not go?"

"Would I quit you?" cried Agnes, starting up, and placing her two hands upon her husband's arm, while she gazed in his face with a look of surprise that had no small touch of fear in it:—"would I quit you? Never! And if you drove me forth, I would come back and be your servant—your slave; or would watch in the corridors but to have a glance as you passed by;—or else I would die," she added, after a moment's pause, for she had spoken with all the rapid energy of alarmed affection. "But tell me, tell me, Philip, what did you mean? For all your smiling, you spoke gravely. Nay, kisses are no answers."

"I did but jest, my Agnes," replied Philip, holding

her to his heart with a fond pressure. "Part with you ! I would sooner part with life !"

As he spoke, the door of the chamber suddenly opened, the hangings were pushed aside, and an attendant appeared.

"How now !" cried the king, unclasping his arms from the slight, beautiful form round which they were thrown. "How now, villain ! Must my privacy be broken at every moment ? How dare you enter my chamber without my call ?" And his flashing eye and reddened cheek spoke that quick impatient spirit which never possessed any man's breast more strongly than that of Philip Augustus. And yet, strange to say, the powers of his mind were such, that every page of his history affords a proof of his having made even his most impetuous passions subservient to his policy ;—not by conquering them, but by giving vent to them in such direction as suited best the exigency of the times and the interest of his kingdom.

"Sire," replied the attendant with a profound reverence, "the good knight Sir Stephen Guerin has just arrived from Paris, and prays an audience."

"Admit him," said Philip ; and his features, which had expanded like an unstrung bow while in the gentler moments of domestic happiness, and had flashed with the broad blaze of the lightning under the effect of sudden irritation, gradually contracted into a look of grave thought as his famous and excellent friend and minister Guerin approached.

He was a tall, thin man, with strong marked features, and was dressed in the black robe and eight-limbed cross of the order of Hospitallers, which habit he retained even long after his having been elected bishop of ~~Sealis~~. He pushed back his hood, and bowed low in sign of reverence as he approached the king ; but Philip advanced to meet, and welcomed him with the affectionate embrace of an equal. "Ha ! fair brother !" said the king. "What gives us the good chance of seeing you, from our town of Paris ? We left you full of weighty matters."

"Matters of still greater weight, beau sire," replied the Hospitaller, "claiming your immediate attention, have made me bold to intrude upon your privacy. An epistle from the good pope Celestin came yesterday by a special messenger, charging your highness—"

"Hold!" cried Philip, raising his finger, as a sign to keep silence. "Come to my closet, brother; we will hear the good bishop's letter in private.—Tarry, sweet Agnes! I have vowed thee three whole days, without the weight of royalty bearing down our hearts; and this shall not detain me long."

"I would not, my lord, for worlds," replied the queen, "that men should say my Philip neglected his kingdom, or his people's happiness, for a woman's smile. I will wait here for your return, be your business long as it may, and think the time well spent.—Rest you well, fair brother," she added, as it were in reply to a beaming smile that for a moment lighted up the harsh features of the Hospitaller; "cut not short your tale for me."

The minister bowed low, and Philip, after having pressed his lips on the fair forehead of his wife, led the way through a long passage with windows on either side, to a small closet in one of the angular turrets of the castle. It was well contrived for the cabinet of a statesman; for, placed as it was, a sort of excrescence from one of the larger towers, it was cut off from all other buildings, so that no human ear could catch one word of any conversation which passed therein. The monarch entered; and making a sign to his minister to close the door, he threw himself on a seat, and stretched forth his hand, as if for the pontiff's letter. "Not a word before the queen!" said he, taking the vellum from the Hospitaller,—"not a word before the queen, of all the idle cavilling of the Roman church. I would not, for all the crowns of Charlemagne, that Agnes should dream of a flaw in my divorce from Ingerburge—though that flaw be no greater a matter than a mote in the sore eyes of the church of Rome—But let me see! What says Celestin?"

"He threatens you, royal sir," replied the minister, "with excommunication, and anathema, and interdict."

"Pshaw!" cried Philip, with a contemptuous smile; "he has not vigour enough to anathemize a flea! 'Tis a good mild priest; somewhat tenacious of his church's rights,—for, let me tell thee, Stephen, had I but craved my divorce from Rome, instead of from my bishops of France, I should have heard no word of anathema or interdict. It was a fault of policy, so far as my personal quiet is concerned; and there might be somewhat of hasty passion in it too; but yet, good knight, 'twas not without forethought. The grasping church of Rome is stretching out her thousand hands into all the kingdoms round about her, and snatching, one by one, the prerogatives of the throne. The time will come,—I see it well,—when the prelate's foot shall tread upon the prince's crown; but I will take no step to put mine beneath the scandal¹ of St. Peter. No! though the everlasting buzzing of all the crimson flies in the conclave should deafen me outright.—But let me read."

The Hospitaller bowed, and silently studied the countenance of the sovereign while he perused the letter of the pontiff. Philip's features, however, underwent no change of expression. His brow knit slightly from the first; but no more than so far as to show attention to what he was reading. His lip, too, maintained its contemptuous curl; but that neither increased nor diminished; and when he had done, he threw the packet lightly on a table, exclaiming, "Stingless! stingless! The good prelate will hurt no one!"

"Too true, sire," replied the impassible Guerin; "he will now hurt no one, for he is dead."

"St. Denis to boot!" cried the king. "Dead! Why told you it not before?—Dead! When did he die?—Has the conclave met?—Have they gone to election?—Whom have they adored?*—Who is the pope? Speak, Hospitaller! speak!"

* One of the four methods of electing a pope is called by *adoration*, which takes place when the first cardinal who speaks, instantly (as is supposed by the movement of the Holy Ghost) does reverence to the person he names, proclaiming him pope; to which must be added the instant suffrage of two-thirds of the assembled concilie.

"The holy conclave have elected the Cardinal Lothaire, sire," replied the knight. "Your highness has seen him here in France as well as at Rome: a man of a great and capacious mind."

"Too great!—too great!" replied Philip, thoughtfully. "He is no Celestin. We shall soon hear more!" and, rising from his seat, he paced the narrow space of his cabinet backwards and forwards for several minutes; then paused, and placing one hand on his counsellor's shoulder, he laid the forefinger of the other on his breast,—"If I could rely on my barons," said he, emphatically,—"if I could rely on my barons;—not that I do not reverence the church, Guerin,—God knows! I would defend it from heathens, and heretics, and miscreants, with my best blood. Witness my journey to the Holy Land!—witness the punishment of Amaury!—witness the expulsion of the Jews! But this Lothaire—"

"Now Innocent the Third," said the minister, taking advantage of a pause in the king's speech. "Why, he is a great man, sire—a man of a vast and powerful mind: firm in his resolves as he is bold in his undertakings—powerful—beloved. I would have my royal lord think what must be his conduct, if Innocent should take the same view of the affairs of France as was taken by Celestin."

Philip paused, and with his eyes bent upon the ground, remained for several minutes in deep thought. Gradually the colour mounted in his cheek, and some strong emotion seemed struggling in his bosom, for his eye flashed, and his lip quivered; and, suddenly catching the arm of the Hospitaller, he shook the clenched fist of his other hand in the air, exclaiming, "He will not! He shall not! He dare not!—Oh! Guerin, if I may but rely upon my barons!"

"Sire, you cannot do so," replied the knight, firmly. "They are turbulent and discontented; and the internal peace of your kingdom has more to fear from their disloyal practices than even your domestic peace has from the ambitious intermeddling of Pope Innocent. You

must not count upon your barons, sire, to support you in opposition to the church. Even now, Sir Julian of the Mount, the sworn friend of the Counts of Boulogne and Flanders, has undertaken a journey to Auvergne, which bodes a new coalition against you, sire. Sir Julian is discontented because you refused him the feoff of Beaumetz, which was held by his sister's husband, dead without heirs. The Count de Boulogne you know to be a traitor. The Count of Flanders was ever a dealer in rebellion. The old Count d'Auvergne, though no rebel, loves you not."

"They will raise a lion!" cried the king, stamping with his foot; "ay, they will raise a lion! Let Sir Julian of the Mount beware! The citizens of Albert demand a charter. Sir Julian claims some ancient rights. See that the charter be sealed to-morrow, Guerin, giving them right of watch, and ward, and wall, —rendering them an untailleable and free commune. Thus shall we punish good Sir Julian of the Mount, and flank his fair lands with a free city, which shall be his annoyance, and give us a sure post upon the very confines of Flanders. See it be done! As to the rest, come what may, my private happiness I will subject to no man's will; nor shall it be my hands that stoop the royal sceptre of France to the bidding of any prelate for whom the earth finds room.—Silence, my friend!" he added, sharply; "the king's resolve is taken; and, above all, let not a doubt of the sureness of her marriage reach the ears of the queen. *I*, Philip of France, say the divorce *shall* stand!—and who is there shall give me the lie in my own land?" Thus saying, the king turned, and led the way back to the apartment where he had left the queen.

His first step upon the rushes of the room in which she sat woke Agnes de Meranie from her reverie; and though her husband's absence had been but short, her whole countenance beamed with pleasure at his return; while, laying on his arm the small white hand which even monks and hermits have celebrated, she gazed up in his face, as if to see whether the tidings he had

neard had stolen any thing from the happiness they were before enjoying. Philip's eyes rested on her full of tenderness and love ; and then turned to his minister with an appealing, an almost reproachful look. Guerin felt, himself, how difficult, how agonizing it would be to part with a being so lovely and so beloved ; and with a deep sigh, and a low inclination to the queen, he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

IN Auvergne, but in a different part of it from that where we left our party of pilgrims, rode onward a personage who seemed to think, with Jaques, that motley is the only wear. Not that he was precisely habited in the piebald garments of the professed fool ; but yet his dress was as many-coloured as the jacket of my ancient friend Harlequin ; and so totally differed from the vestments of that age that it seemed as if he had taken a jump of two or three centuries, and stolen some gay habit from the court of Charles the Seventh. He wore long, tight, silk breeches, of a bright flame-colour ; a sky-blue cassock of cloth girt round his waist by a yellow girdle, below which it did not extend above three inches, forming a sort of frill about his middle ; while, at the same time, this sort of surcoat being without sleeves, his arms appeared from beneath covered with a jacket of green silk, cut close to his shape, and buttoned tight at the wrists. On his head he wore a black cap, not unlike the famous Phrygian bonnet ; and he was mounted on a strong gray mare, then considered a ridiculous and disgraceful equipage.

This strange personage's figure no way corresponded with his absurd dress ; for, had one desired a model of active strength, it could nowhere have been found better than in his straight and muscular limbs. His face,

however, was more in accordance with the extravagance of his habiliments ; for, certainly, never did a more curious physiognomy come from the cunning and various hand of nature. His nose was long, and was seemingly boneless ; for, ever and anon, whether from some natural convulsive motion, or from a voluntary and laudable desire to improve upon the singular hideousness of his countenance, this long, sausage-like contrivance in the midst of his face would wriggle from side to side, with a very portentous and uneasy movement. His eyes were large and gray, and did not in the least discredit the nose in whose company they were placed, though they had in themselves a manifest tendency to separate, never having any fixed and determined direction, but wandering about apparently independent of each other,—sometimes far asunder,—sometimes, like Pyramus and Thisbe, wooing each other across the wall of his nose with a most portentous squint. Besides this obliquity, they were endowed with a cold leadenness of stare, which would have rendered the whole face as meaningless as a mask, had not, every now and then, a still, keen, sharp glance stolen out of them for a moment, like the sudden kindling up of a fire, where all seemed cold and dead. His mouth was guarded with large, thick lips, which extended far and wide through a black and bushy beard ; and, when he yawned, which was more than once the case as he rode through the fertile valleys of Limagne, a great chasm seemed to open in his countenance, exposing to the very back two ranges of very white, broad teeth, with their accompanying gums.

For some way, the traveller rode on in quiet, seeming to exercise himself in giving additional ugliness to his features, by screwing them into every sort of form, till he became aware that he was watched by a party of men, whose appearance had nothing in it very consolatory to the journeyer of those days.

The road through the valley was narrow ; the hills, rising rapidly on each side, were steep and rugged ;

and the party which we have mentioned was stationed at some two or three hundred yards before him, consisting of about ten or twelve archers, who, lurking behind a mass of stones and bushes, seemed prepared to impose a toll upon the highway through the valley.

The traveller, however, pursued his journey, though he very well comprehended their aim and object, nor did he exhibit any sign of fear or alarm beyond the repeated wriggling of his nose, till such time as he beheld one of the foremost of the group begin to fit an arrow to his bowstring, and take a clear step beyond the bushes. Then, suddenly reversing his position on the horse, which was proceeding at an easy canter, he placed his head on the saddle, and his feet in the air; and in this position advanced quietly on his way, not at all unlike one of those smart and active gentlemen who may be seen nightly in the spring-time circumambulating the area of Astley's amphitheatre.

The feat which he performed, however simple and legitimate at present, was quite sufficiently extraordinary in those days to gain him the reputation of a close intimacy with Satan, even if it did not make him pass for Satan himself.

The thunderstruck archer dropped his arrow, exclaiming, " 'Tis the Devil!" to which conclusion most of his companions readily assented. Nevertheless, one less ceremonious than the rest started forward and bent his own bow for the shot. "If he be the Devil," cried he, "the more reason to give him an arrow in his liver: what matters it to us whether he be Devil or saint, so he has a purse?" As he spoke, he drew his bow to the full extent of his arm, and raised the arrow to his eye. But at the very moment the missile twanged away from the string, the strange horseman we have described let himself fall suddenly across his mare, much after the fashion of a sack of wheat, and the arrow whistled idly over him. Then, swinging himself up again into his natural position, he turned his frightful countenance to the *Routiers*, and burst into a

loud horse-laugh that had something in its ringing coppery tone truly unearthly.

“Fools!” cried he, riding close up to the astonished plunderers. “Do you think to hurt me? Why, I am your patron saint, the Devil. Do not you know your lord and master? But, poor fools, I will give you a morsel. Lay ye a strong band between Vic le Comte and the lake Pavin, and watch there till ye see a fine band of pilgrims coming down. Skin them! skin them, if ye be true thieves. Leave them not a besant to bless themselves!”

Here one of the thieves, moved partly by a qualm of conscience, partly by bodily fear at holding a conversation with a person he most devoutly believed to be the Prince of Darkness, signed himself with the cross,—an action not at all unusual among the plunderers of that age, who, so far from casting off the bonds of religion at the same time that they threw off all the other ties of civil society, were very often but the more superstitious and credulous from the very circumstances of their unlawful trade. However, no sooner did the horseman see the sign than he affected to start. “Ha!” cried he. “You drive me away; but we shall meet again, good friends,—we shall meet again, and, trust me, I will give you a warm reception. Haw, haw, haw!” and, contorting his face into a most horrible grin, he poured forth one of his fiendlike laughs, and galloped off at full speed.

“Jesu Maria!” cried one of the Routiers, “it is the fiend, certainly,—I will give him an arrow, for Heaven’s benison!” But whether it was that the Bowman’s hand trembled, or that the horseman was too far distant, certain it is, he rode on in safety, and did not even know that he had been again shot at.

“I will give the half of the first booty I make to Our Lady of Mount Ferrand,” cried one of the robbers, thinking to appease Heaven and guard against Satan by sharing the proceeds of his next breach of the Decalogue with the priest of his favourite saint.

“And I will lay out six sous of Paris on a general

absolution!" cried another, whose faith was great in the potency of papal authority.

But, leaving these gentry to arrange their affairs with Heaven as they thought fit, we must follow for a time the person they mistook for their spiritual enemy, and must also endeavour to develop what was passing in his mind, which really did in some degree find utterance; he being one of those people, whose lips, those ever-unfaithful guardians of the treasures of the heart, are peculiarly apt to murmur forth, unconsciously, that on which the mind is busy. His thoughts burst from him in broken murmured sentences, somewhat to the following effect:—“What matters it to me who is killed?—Say the villains kill the men-at-arms.—Haw, haw, haw! ’Twill be rare sport!—And then we will strip them, and I shall have gold, gold, gold! But the men-at-arms will kill the villains. I care not! I will help to kill them:—then I shall get gold, too.—Haw, haw, haw! The villains plundered some rich merchants yesterday, and I will plunder them to-morrow. Oh, rare! Then, that Thibalt of Auvergne may be killed in the mêlée, with his cold look and his sneer.—Oh! how I shall like to see that lip that called me *De Coucy's fool juggler*,—how I shall like to see it grinning with death! I will have one of his white foreteeth for a mouthpiece to my reed flute, and one of his arm-bones polished to whip tops withal.—Haw, haw, haw! De Coucy's fool juggler!—Haw, haw, haw, haw! Ay, and my good Lord De Coucy!—the beggarly miscreant. He struck me, when I had got hold of a lord's daughter at the storming of Constantinople, and forbade me to show her violence.—Haw, haw! I paid him for meddling with my plunder, by stealing his; and, because I dared not carry it about, buried it in a field at Naples:—but I owe him the blow yet. It shall be paid!—Haw, haw, haw! Shall I tell him now the truth of what he sent me to Burgundy for? No, no, no! for then he'll sit at home at ease, and be a fine lord; and I shall be thrust into the kitchen, and called for, to amuse the noble knights and dames. Haw, haw! No, no! he

shall wander yet awhile ; but I must make up my tale." And the profundity of thought into which he now fell put a stop to his solitary loquacity ; though ever and anon, as the various fragments of roguery, and villainy, and folly, which formed the strange chaos of his mind, seemed, as it were, to knock against each other in the course of his cogitations, he would leer about, with a glance in which shrewdness certainly predominated over idiocy, or would loll his tongue forth from his mouth, and, shutting one of his eyes, would make the other take the whole circuit of the earth and sky around him, as if he were mocking the universe itself ; and then, at last, burst out into a long, shrill, ringing laugh, by the tone of which it was difficult to tell whether it proceeded from pain or from mirth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE hermit was as good as his word ; and in two days De Coucy, though certainly unable to forget that he had had a severe fall, was yet perfectly capable of mounting on horseback ; and felt that, in the field or at the tournament, he could still have charged a good lance, or wielded a heavy mace. The night before, had arrived at the chapel the strange personage some of whose cogitations we have recorded in the preceding chapter ; and who, having been ransomed by the young knight in the Holy Land, had become in some sort his bondsman.

On a mistaken idea of his folly, De Coucy had built a still more mistaken idea of his honesty, attributing his faults to madness, and, in the carelessness of his nature, looking upon many of his madnesses as virtues. That his intellect was greatly impaired, or rather warped, there can be no doubt ; but it seemed, at the same time, that all the sense which he had left had concentrated

itself into an unfathomable fund of villany and malice, often equally uncalled for by others, and unserviceable to himself.

Originally one of the jugglers who had accompanied the second crusade to the Holy Land, he had been made prisoner by the Infidels ; and, after several years' bondage, had been ~~redeemed~~ by De Coucy, who, from mere compassion, treated him with the greater favour and kindness because he was universally hated and avoided by every one ; though, to say the truth, *Gallon the Fool*, as he was called, was perfectly equal to hold his own part, being vigorous in no ordinary degree, expert at all weapons, and joining all the thousand tricks and arts of his ancient profession to the sly cunning which so often supplies the place of judgment.

When brought into his lord's presence at the Chapel of the Lake, and informed of the accident which had happened to him, without expressing any concern, he burst into one of his wild laughs, exclaiming, " Haw, haw, haw !—Oh, rare !"

" How now, Sir Gallon the Fool !" cried De Coucy. " Do you laugh at your lord's misfortune ? "

" Nay ! I laugh to think him nearly as nimble as I am," replied the juggler, " and to find he can roll down a rock of twenty fathom without dashing his brains out. Why, thou art nearly good enough for a minstrel's fool, Sire de Coucy !—Haw, haw, haw ! How I should like to see thee tumbling before a *cour plenière* !"

The knight shook his fist at him, and bade him tell the success of his errand, feeling more galled by the jongleur's jest before the fair Isadore of the Mount than he had ever felt upon a similar occasion.

" The success of my errand is very unsuccessful," replied the jongleur, wagging his nose, and shutting one of his eyes, while he fixed the other on De Coucy's face. " Your uncle, Count Gaston, of Tankerville, will not send you a livre."

" What ! is he pinched with avarice ?" cried De Coucy. " Have ten years had power to change a free and noble spirit to the miser's griping slavery ? My

curse upon Time ! for he not only saps our castles, and unbends our sinews, but he casts down the bulwarks of the mind, and plunders all the better feelings of our hearts.—What say you, lady, is he not a true coterel—that old man with his scythe and hourglass ?”

“ He is a bitter enemy, but a true one,” replied Isadore of the Mount. “ He comes not upon us without warning.—But your man seems impatient to tell out his tale, Sir Knight; at least, so I read the faces he makes.”

“ Bless your sweet lips !” cried the jongleur; “ you are the first, that ever saw my face, that called me man. *Devil* or *fool* are the best names that I get. Prithee, marry my master, and then I shall be *your* man.”

De Coucy’s heart beat thick at the associations which the juggler’s words called up; and the tell-tale blood stole over the fair face of Isadore of the Mount; while old Sir Julian laughed loud, and called it a marvellous good jest.

“ Come !” cried De Coucy, “ leave thy grimaces, and tell me, what said my uncle ? Why would he not send the sums I asked ?”

“ He said nothing,” replied the juggler. “ Haw, haw, haw !—He said nothing, because he is dead, and—”

“ Hold ! hold !” cried De Coucy.—“ Dead ! God help me ! and I taxed him with avarice. Fool, thou hast made me sin against his memory.—How did he die ?—when ?—where ?”

“ Nobody knows when—nobody knows where—nobody knows how !” replied the juggler with a grin, which he could not suppress at his master’s grief. “ All they know is, that he is as dead as the saints at Jerusalem ; and the king and the Duke of Burgundy are quarrelling about his broad lands, which the two fools call moveables ! He is dead !—quite dead !—Haw, haw, haw ! Haw, haw !”

“ Laughest thou, villain !” cried De Coucy, starting up, and striking him a buffet which made him reel to the other side of the hut. “ Let that teach thee not to laugh where other men weep !—By my life,” he added,

taking his seat again, “he was as noble a gentleman, and as true a knight, as ever buckled on spurs. He promised that I should be his heir, and doubtless he has kept his word ; but, for all the fine lands he has left me —nay, nor for broad France itself, would I have heard the news that have reached me but now !”

“ Haw, haw, haw ! Haw, haw, haw !” echoed from the other side of the hut.

“ Why laughest thou, fool ?” cried De Coucy. “ Wilt thou never cease thy idiot merriment ?—Why laughest thou, I say ?”

“ Because,” replied the jongleur, “ if the fair lands thou wouldest not have, the fair lands thou shalt not have. The good Count of Tankerville left neither will nor charter ; so that, God willing ! the king or the Duke of Burgundy shall have the lands, whichever has the longest arm to take, and the strongest to keep. So the Vidame of Besançon bade me say.”

“ But how is it, my son,” said the hermit, who was present, “ that you are not heir direct to your uncle’s feoff, if there be no other heirs ?”

“ Why, good hermit,” replied De Coucy, “ uncle and nephew were but names of courtesy between us, because we loved each other. The Count de Tankerville married my father’s sister, who died childless ; and his affection seemed to settle all in me, then just an orphan. I left him some ten years ago, when but a squire, to take the holy cross ; and though I have often heard of him by letter and by message sent across the wide seas, which showed that I was not forgotten, I now return and find him dead, and his lands gone to others. Well ! let them go : ‘tis not for them I mourn ; ‘tis that I have lost the best good friend I had.”

“ You wrong my regard, De Coucy,” said the Count d’Auvergne. “ None is, or was, more deeply your friend than Thibalt d’Auvergne ; and as to lands and gold, good knight, is not one-half of all I have due to the man who has three times saved my life ?—in the shipwreck, in the battle-field, and in the mortal plague ; even were he not my sworn brother in arms ?”

"Nay, nay ! D'Auvergne, De Coucy's poor," replied the knight ; "but he has enough. He is proud too, and, as you know, no Vavassour ; and, though his lands be small, he is lord of the soil, holding from no one, owing homage and man-service to none—no, not to the king, though you smile, fair Sir Julian. My land is the last *terre libre* in France."

"Send away your fool juggler, De Coucy," said the Count d'Auvergne : "I would speak to you without his goodly presence."

De Coucy made a sign to his strange attendant, who quitted the hut ; and the count proceeded. "De Coucy," said he, "was it wise to send that creature upon an errand of such import ? Can you rely upon his tale ? You know him to be a crackbrained knave. I am sure he has much malice ; and though little understanding, yet infinite cunning. Take my advice ! Either go thither yourself, or send some more trusty messenger to ascertain the truth."

"Not I !" cried De Coucy,—"not I ! I will neither go nor-send, to make the good folks scoff at the poor De Coucy hankering after estates he cannot have ; like a beggar standing by a rich man's kitchen, and snuffing the dishes as they pass him by. Besides, you do Gallon wrong. He is brave as a lion, and grateful for kindness. He would not injure me ; and if he would, he has not wit to frame a tale like that. He knew not that I was not my uncle's lawful heir. Oh, no, 'tis true ! 'tis true ! So let it rest. What care I ? I have my lance, and my sword, and knightly spurs ; and surely I may thus go through the world, in spite of fortune."

D'Auvergne saw that his friend was determined, and urged his point no further. His own determination, however, was taken, on the very first opportunity to go himself privately, either to Besançon or Dijon, between which places the estates in question lay, and to make those inquiries for his friend which De Coucy was not inclined to do himself. Nothing more occurred that night worthy of notice ; and the next morning the

whole party descended to the shepherd's hut, where their horses had been left, mounted, and proceeded towards Vic le Comte, the dwelling of the counts of Auvergne.

The hermit, whose skill had been so serviceable to De Coucy, mounted on a strong mule, accompanied them on their way.

"I will crave your escort, gentle knights," he said, as they were about to depart, "I am called back against my will, to meddle with the affairs of men—affairs which their own wilful obstinacy, their vile passions, or their gross follies, ever so entangle, that it needs the manifest hand of Heaven to lead them even through one short life. I thought to have done with them; but the king calls for me, and, next to Heaven, my duty is to him."

"What! do we see the famous hermit of the forest of Vincennes?"* demanded old Sir Julian of the Mount, "by whose sage counsels 'tis hoped that Philip may yet be saved from driving his poor vassals to resistance."

"Famous, and a hermit!" exclaimed the recluse. "Good, my son! if you sought fame as little as I do, you would not have come from the borders of Flanders to the heart of Auvergne. I left Vincennes to rid myself of the fame they put on me;—you quitted your castle and your peasants to meddle in affairs you are not fit for. Would you follow my counsel, you would forget your evil errand. See your friend—but as a friend; and, returning to your hall, sit down in peace and charity with all mankind!"

"Ha! what! how?" cried the obstinate old man angrily, all his complaisant feelings towards the hermit turned into acrimony by this unlucky speech. "Shall I be turned from my purpose by an old enthusiast? I tell thee, hermit, that were it but because thou bidst me not, I would go on to the death!"

* For a fuller account of this singular person, and the effect his counsels had upon the conduct of Philip Augustus, see Rigord.

Heaven's life ! What I have said, that I will do, is as immovable as the centre !"

The Count d'Auvergne here interposed ; and, promising the hermit safe escort, at least through his father's territories, he led Sir Julian to the front of the cavalcade, and engaged him in a detail of all the important measures which Philip Augustus, during the last five years, had undertaken and successfully carried through by the advice of that very hermit who followed in their train—measures with which this history has nothing to do, but which may be found faithfully recorded by Rigord, William the Breton, and William of Nangis, as well as many other veracious historians of that age and country.

Sir Julian and the count were followed by the fair Isadore, with De Coucy by her side, in even a more gay and lively mood than ordinary, notwithstanding the sad news he had heard the night before. Indeed, to judge from his conduct then, it would have seemed that his mind was one of those which, deeply depressed by any of those heavy weights that Time is always letting drop upon the human heart, rise up the next moment with that sort of elastic rebound which instantly casts off the load of care, and spring higher than before. Such, however, was not the case. De Coucy was perplexed with new sensations towards Isadore, the nature of which he did not well understand ; and, rather than show his embarrassment, he spoke lightly of every thing, making himself appear to the least advantage, where, in truth, he wished the most to please.

Isadore's answers were brief, and he felt that he was not at all in the right road to her favour : and yet he was going on, when something accidentally turned the conversation to the friend he had lost in the Count de Tankerville. Happily for Isadore's prepossession in the young knight's favour, it did so ; for then, all the deeper, all the finer feelings of his heart awoke, and he spoke of high qualities and generous virtues, as one who knew them from possessing them himself.

Isadore's answers grew longer: the chain seemed taken off her thoughts,—and then, first, that quick and confident communication of feelings and ideas began between her and De Coucy, which, sweet itself, generally ends in something sweeter still. They were soon entirely occupied with each other, and might have continued so, Heaven knows how long! had not De Coucy's squire, Hugo de Barre, who, as before, preceded the cavalcade, suddenly stopped, and, pointing to a confused mass of bushes which, climbing the side of the hill, hid the farther progress of the road, exclaimed—

“I see those bushes move the contrary way to the wind!”

“Haw, haw, haw!” cried a voice from behind,—“haw, haw, haw!”

All was now hurry, for the signs and symptoms which the squire descried were only attributable to one of those plundering ambuscades, which were any thing but rare in those good old times; and the narrowness of road, together with the obstruction of the bushes, totally prevented the knights from estimating the number or quality of their enemies. All then was hurry.—The squires hastened forward to give the knights their heavy-armed horses, and to clasp their casques; and the knights vociferated loudly for the archers and varlets to advance, and for Isadore and her women to retire to the rear: but before this could be done, a flight of arrows began to drop among them, and one would have certainly struck the lady, or at least her jennet, had it not been for the shield of De Coucy, raised above her head.

De Coucy paused. “Take my shield,” he cried, “Galon the Fool, and hold it over the lady! Guard my lance too! There is no tilting against those bushes!—St. Michael! St. Michael!” he shouted, snatching his ponderous battle-axe from the saddle-bow, and flourishing it round his head, as if it had been a willow-wand. “A Coucy! A Coucy! St. Michael! St. Michael!” and while the archers of Auvergne shot a close sharp flight of

arrows into the bushes, De Coucy spurred on his horse after the Count d'Auvergne, who had advanced with Sir Julian of the Mount and some of the light-armed squires.

His barbed horse thundered over the ground, and in an instant he was by their side, at a spot where the marauders had drawn a heavy iron chain across the road, from behind which they numbered with their arrows every seemingly feeble spot on the count's armour.

To leap the chain was impossible ; and though Count Thibalt spurred his heavy horse against it, to bear it down, all his efforts were ineffectual. One blow of De Coucy's axe, however, and the chain flew sharp asunder with a ringing sound. His horse bounded forward ; and his next blow lighted on the head of one of the chief marauders, cleaving through steel cap, and scull, and brain, as if nothing had been opposed to the axe's edge.

It was then one might see how were performed those marvellous feats of chivalry which astonish our latter age. The pikes, the short swords, and the arrows of the Cotereaux turned from the armour of the knights, as waves from a rock ; while De Coucy, animated with the thought that Isadore's eyes looked upon his deeds, out-acted all his former prowess ;—not a blow fell from his arm, but the object of it lay prostrate in the dust. The Cotereaux scattered before him, like chaff before the wind. The Count d'Auvergne followed on his track, and, with the squires, drove the whole body of marauders which had occupied the road down into the valley ; while the archers picked off those who had stationed themselves on the hill.

For an instant, the Cotereaux endeavoured to rally behind some bushes, which rendered the movements of the horses both dangerous and difficult ; but at that moment a loud ringing “ Haw, haw, haw ! haw, haw ! ” burst forth from behind them ; and Gallon the Fool, mounted on his mare, armed with De Coucy's lance and shield, and a face whose frightfulness was worth a host, pricked in among them ; and, to use the phrase of the

times, enacted prodigies of valour, shouting between each stroke, "Haw, haw ! haw, haw !" with such a tone of fiendish exultation, that De Coucy himself could hardly help thinking him akin to Satan. As to the Cotereaux, the generality of them believed in his diabolical nature with the most implicit faith ; and shouting "the Devil ! —the Devil !" as soon as they saw him, fled in every direction, by the rocks, the woods, and the mountains. One only staid to aim an arrow at him, exclaiming, "Devil ! He's no devil, but a false traitor who has brought us to the slaughter, and I will have his heart's blood ere I die." But Gallon, by one of his strange and unaccountable twists, avoided the shaft ; and the Coterel was fain to save himself by springing up a steep rock with all the agility of fear.

No sooner was this done, than Gallon the Fool, with that avaricious propensity to which persons in a state of intellectual weakness are often subject, sprang from his mare, and very irreverently casting down De Coucy's lance and shield, began plundering the bodies of two of the dead Cotereaux, leaving them not a rag which he could appropriate to himself.

Seeing him in this employment, and the disrespectful treatment which he showed his arms, De Coucy spurred up to him, and raised his tremendous axe above his head : "Gallon !" cried he, in a voice of thunder.

The jongleur looked up with a grin. "Haw, haw ! haw, haw !" cried he, seeing the battle-axe swinging above his head, as if in the very act of descending. "You cannot make me wink.—Haw, haw !" And he applied himself again to strip the dead bodies with most indefatigable perseverance.

"If it were not for your folly, I would cleave your scull, for daring to use my lance and shield !" cried De Coucy. "But get up ! get up !" he added, striking him a pretty severe blow with the back of the axe. "Lay not there, like a red-legged crow, picking the dead bodies. Where is the lady ? Why did you leave her, when I told you to stay ?"

"I left the lady, with her maidens, in a snug hole in

the rock," replied the juggler, rising unwillingly from his prey ; " and seeing you at work with the Cotereaux, I came to help the strongest."

There might be more truth in this reply than De Coucy suspected ; but, taken as a jest, it turned away his anger ; and bidding Hugo de Barre, who had approached, bring his spear and shield, he rode back to the spot where the combat first began. Gallon the Fool had indeed, as he said, safely bestowed Isadore and her women in one of the caves with which the mountains of Auvergne are pierced in every direction ; and here De Coucy found her, together with her father, Sir Julian, who was babbling of an arrow which had passed through his tunic without hurting him.

The Count d'Auvergne had gone, in the mean time, to ascertain that the road was entirely cleared of the banditti ; and, during his absence, the lady and her attendants applied themselves to bind up the wounds of one or two of the archers who had been hurt in the affray—a purely female task, according to the customs of the times. The hermit returned with the Count d'Auvergne ; and, though he spoke not of it, it was remarked that an arrow had grazed his brow ; and two rents in his brown robe seemed to indicate that, though he had taken no active part in the struggle, he had not shunned its dangers.

Such skirmishes were so common in those days, that the one we speak of would have been scarcely worth recording, had it not been for two circumstances : in the first place, the effect produced upon the robbers by the strange appearance and gestures of Gallon the Fool ; and, in the next, the new link which it brought between the hearts of Isadore and De Coucy. In regard to the first, it must be remembered that the appearance of all sorts of evil spirits in an incarnate form was so very frequent in the times whereof we speak, that Rigord cites at least twenty instances thereof, and Guillaume de Nangis brings a whole troop of them into the very choir of the church. It is not to be wondered at, then, that a band of superstitious marauders, whose very

trade would of course render them more liable to such diabolical visitations, should suspect so very ugly a personage as Gallon of being the Evil One himself: especially when to his various unaccountable contortions he added the very devil-like act of leading them into a scrape, and then triumphing in their defeat.

But to return to the more respectable persons of my cavalcade. The whole party set out again, retaining, as if by common consent, the same order of march which they had formerly preserved. Nor did Isadore, though as timid and feminine as any of her sex in that day, show greater signs of fear than a hasty glanee, every now and then, to the mountains. A slight shudder, too, shook her frame, as she passed on the road three cold, inanimate forms, lying so unlike the living, and bearing ghastly marks of De Coucy's battle-axe; but the very sight made her draw her rein towards him, as if from some undefined combination in her mind of her own weakness and his strength; and from the tacit admiration which courage and power command in all ages, but which, in those times, suffered no diminution on the score of humanity.

No lady of the rank of Isadore of the Mount ever travelled, in the days we speak of, without a bevy of maidens following her; and as the squires and pages of De Coucy and D'Auvergne were fresh from Palestine, where women were hothouse plants, not exposed to common eyes, it may be supposed that we could easily join to our principal history many a rare and racy episode of love-making that went on in the second rank of our pilgrims; but we shall have enough to do with the personages already before us, ere we lay down our pen, and therefore shall not meddle or make with the manners of the inferior classes, except where they are absolutely forced on our notice.

Winding down through numerous sunny valleys and rich and beautiful scenery, the cavalcade soon began to descend upon the fertile plains of Limagne, then covered with the blossoms of a thousand trees, and bathed in a flood of loveliness. The ferry over the Allier soon

landed them in the sweet valley of Vic le Comte ; and Thibalt d'Auvergne, gazing round him, forgot in the view all the agonies of existence ; while stretching forth his arms, as if to embrace it, he exclaimed, “ My native land ! ”

He had seen the south of Auvergne ; he had seen the mountains of D'Or and the Puy de Dome,—all equally his own ; but they spoke but generally to his heart, and could not for a moment wipe out his griefs. But when the scenes of his childhood broke upon his sight ; when he beheld every thing mingled in memory with the first, sweetest impressions in being—every thing he had known and joyed in before existence had a cloud, it seemed as if the last five years had been blotted out of the book of Fate, and that he was again in the brightness of his youth—the youth of the heart and of the soul, ere it is worn by sorrow, or hardened by treachery, or broken by disappointment.

The valley of Vic is formed by two branches of the mountains of the Forez, which bound it to the east ; and in the centre of the rich plain land thus enclosed, stands the fair city of Vic le Comte. It was then as sweet a town as any in the realm of France ; and, gathered together upon a gentle slope, with the old castle on a high mound behind, it formed a dark pyramid in the midst of the sunshiny valley, being cast into temporary shadow by a passing cloud at the moment the cavalcade approached ; while the bright light of the summer evening poured over all the rest of the scene ; and the blue mountains, rising high beyond, offered a soft and airy background to the whole. Avoiding the town, Count Thibalt led the way round by a road to the right, and in a few minutes they were opposite to the castle, at the distance of about half a mile.

It was a large, heavy building, consisting of an infinite number of towers of various sizes, and of different forms—some round, some square, all gathered together without any apparent order, on the top of an eminence which commanded the town. The platform of each tower, whether square or round, was battlemented, and

every angle which admitted of such a contrivance was ornamented with a small turret or watch-tower, which generally rose somewhat higher than the larger one to which it was attached. Near the centre of the building, however, rose two masses of masonry, distinguished from all the others ;—the one by its size, being a heavy square tower, or keep, four times as large as any of the rest ; and the other by its height, rising thin and tall far above every surrounding object. This was called the beffroy, or belfry, and therein stood a watchman night and day, ready, on the slightest alarm, to sound his horn, or ring the immense bell called *ban cloque*, which was suspended above his head.

From the gate of the castle to the walls of the town extended a gentle green slope, which, now covered with tents and booths, resembled precisely an English fair ; and from the spot where D'Auvergne and his companions stood multitudes of busy beings could be seen moving there in various garbs and colours, some on horseback, some on foot, giving great liveliness to the scene ; while the unutterable multitude of weather-cocks, with which every pinnacle of the castle was adorned, fluttered in addition with a thousand flags, and banners, and streamers in gay and sparkling confusion.

Before the cavalcade had made a hundred steps beyond the angle of the town which had concealed them from the castle, the eyes of the warder fell upon them ; and in an instant a loud and clamorous blast of the trumpet issued from the belfry. It was instantly taken up by a whole band in the castle court-yard.

D'Auvergne knew his welcome home, and raised his horn to his lips in reply. At the same instant, every archer in his train, by an irresistible impulse, followed their lord's example. Each man's home was before him, and they blew together in perfect unison the famous *Bienvenu Auvergnat*, till the walls, and the towers, and the hills echoed to the sound.

At that moment the gates of the castle were thrown open, and a gallant train of horsemen issued forth, and

galloped down towards our pilgrims. At their head was an old man richly dressed in crimson and gold. The fire of his eye was unquenched, the rose of his cheek unpaled, and the only effect of seventy summers to be seen upon him was the snowy whiteness of his hair. D'Auvergne's horse flew like the wind to meet him. The old man and the young one sprang to the ground together. The father clasped his child to his heart, and, weeping on his iron shoulder, exclaimed, "My son ! my son !"

CHAPTER VII.

LET us suppose the welcome given to all, and the guests within the castle of the Count d'Auvergne, who, warned by messengers of his son's approach, had called his *cour plenière* to welcome his return.

It was one of those gay and lively scenes now seldom met with, where pageant, and splendour, and show were unfettered by cold form and ceremony. The rigid etiquette which in two centuries after enchain'd every movement of the French court was then unknown. Titles of honour rose no higher than Beau Sire, or Monseigneur, and these even were applied more as a mark of reverence for great deeds and splendid virtues, than for wealth and hereditary rank. All was gay and free, and though respect was shown to age and station, it was the respect of an early and unsophisticated age, before the free-will offering of the heart to real dignity and worth had been regulated by the cold rigidity of a law. Yet each person in that day felt his own station, struggled for none that was not his due, and willingly paid the tribute of respect to the grade above his own.

Through the thousand chambers and the ten thousand

passages of the château of Vic le Comte ran backwards and forwards pages, and varlets, and squires, in proportion to the multitude of guests. Each of these attendants, though performing what would be now considered the menial offices of personal service to the various knightly and noble visitors, was himself of noble birth and aspirant to the honours of chivalry. Nor was this the case alone at the courts of sovereign princes like the Count d'Auvergne. Parents of the highest rank were in that age happy to place their sons in the service of the poorest knight, provided that his own exploits gave warranty that he would breed them up to deeds of honour and glory. It was a sort of apprenticeship to chivalry.

All these choice attendants, for the half-hour after Count Thibalt's return, hurried, as we have said, from chamber to chamber, offering their services, and aiding the knights who had come to welcome their young lord to unbuckle their heavy armour, without the defence of which the act of travelling, especially in Auvergne, was rash and dangerous. Multitudes of fresh guests were also arriving every moment—fair dames and gallant knights, vassals and vavassours;—some followed by a gay train; some bearing nothing but lance and sword; some carrying themselves their lyre, without which, if known as troubadours, they never journeyed; and some accompanied by whole troops of minstrels, jugglers, fools, rope-dancers, and mimics, whom they brought along with them out of compliment to their feudal chief, towards whose *cour plenière* they took their way.

Numbers of these buffoons also were scattered among the tents and booths, which we have mentioned, on the outside of the castle gate; and here, too, were merchants and pedlers of all kinds, who had hurried to Vic le Comte with inconceivable speed, on the very first rumour of a *cour plenière*. In one booth might be seen cloth of gold and silver, velvets, silks, cendals, and every kind of fine stuffs; in another, ermines, minever, and all sorts of furs. Others, again, displayed

silver cups and vessels, with golden ornaments for clasping the mantles of the knights and ladies, called *fermailles*; and again, others exhibited cutlery and armour of all kinds; Danish battle-axes, casques of Poitiers, Cologne swords, and Rouen hauberts. Neither was noise wanting. The laugh, the shout, the call, within and without the castle walls was mingled with the sound of a thousand instruments, from the flute to the hurdygurdy; while, at the same time, every point of the scene was fluttering and alive, whether with gay dresses and moving figures, or pennons, flags, and banners, on the walls and pinnacles of the château.

Precisely at the hour of four, a band of minstrels, richly clothed, placed themselves before the great gate of the castle, and performed what was called *courier à l'eau*, which gave notice to every one that the banquet was about to be placed upon the table. At that sound all the knights and ladies left the chambers to which they had first been marshalled, and assembled in one of the vast halls of the castle, where the pages offered to each a silver basin and napkin to wash their hands previous to the meal.

At this part of the ceremony De Coucy, Heaven knows how! found himself placed by the side of Isadore of the Mount; and he would willingly have given a buffet to the gay young page who poured the water over her fair hands, and who looked up in her face with so saucy and page-like a grin, that Isadore could not but smile, while she thanked him for his service.

The old Count d'Auvergne stood speaking with his son; and, while he welcomed the various guests as they passed before him with word and glance, he still resumed his conversation with Count Thibalt. Nor did that conversation seem of the most pleasing character; for his brow appeared to catch the sadness of his son's, from which the light of joy, that his return had kindled up, had now again passed away.

"If your knightly word be pledged, my son," said the old count, as the horns again sounded to table, "no fears of mine shall stay you; but I had rather

you had sworn to beard the soldan on his throne than that which you have undertaken." The conversation ended with a sigh, and the guests were ushered to the banquet-hall.

It was one of those vast chambers of which few remain to the present day. One, however, may still be seen at La Brède, the château of the famous Montesquieu, of somewhat the same dimensions. It was eighty feet in length, by fifty in breadth; and the roof, of plain dark oak, rose from walls near thirty feet high, and met in the form of a pointed arch in the centre. Neither columns nor pilasters ornamented the sides; but thirty complete suits of mail, with sword, and spear, and shield, battleaxe, mace, and dagger hung against each wall; and over every suit projected a banner, either belonging to the house of Auvergne, or won by some of its members in the battle-field. The floor was strewed thickly with green leaves; and on each space left vacant on the wall by the suits of armour was hung a large branch of oak, covered with its foliage. From such simple decorations, bestowed upon the hall itself, no one would have expected to behold a board laid out with as much splendour and delicacy as the most scrupulous gourmand of the present day could require to give savour to his repast.

The table, which extended the whole length of the hall, was covered with fine damask linen; a manufacture, the invention of which though generally attributed to the seventeenth century is of infinitely older date. Long benches, covered with tapestry, extended on each side of the table; and the place of every guest was marked, even as in the present times, by a small round loaf of bread, covered with a fine napkin, embroidered with gold. By the side of the bread lay a knife, though the common girdle dagger often saved the lord of the mansion the necessity of providing his guests with such implements. To this was added a spoon of silver; but forks there were none; their first mention in history being in the days of Charles the Fifth of France.

A row of silver cups also ornamented both sides

of the board ; the first five on either hand being what were called *hanaps*, which differed from the others in being raised upon a high stem, after the fashion of the chalice. Various vases of water and of wine, some of silver, some of crystal, were distributed in different parts of the table, fashioned for the most part in strange and fanciful forms, representing dragons, castles, ships, and even men ; and an immense mass of silver and gold, in the different shapes of plates and goblets, blazed upon two buffets, or *dressoirs*, as they are called by Helenor de Poitiers, placed at the higher part of the hall, near the seat of the count himself.

Thus far the arrangements differed but little from those of our own times. What was to follow, however, was somewhat more in opposition to the ideas of the present day. The doors of the hall were thrown open, and the splendid train of knights and ladies which the *cour pleni  re* had assembled entered to the banquet. The Count d'Auvergne first took his place in a chair with *dossier* and *dais*, as it was particularized in those days, or, in other words, high raised back and canopy. He then proceeded to arrange what was called the *assiette* of the table ; namely, that very difficult task of placing those persons together whose minds and qualities were best calculated to assimilate : a task, on the due execution of which the pleasure of such meetings must ever depend, but which will appear doubly delicate, when we remember that then each knight and lady, placed side by side, ate from the same plate, and drank from the same cup.

That sort of quick perception of proprieties which we now call *tact* belongs to no age ; and the Count d'Auvergne, in the thirteenth century, possessed as much of it as a patroness of Almack's. All his guests were satisfied, and De Coucy drank out of the same cup as Isadore of the Mount.

They were deliriating draughts he drank, and he now began to feel that he had never loved before. The glance of her bright eye, the touch of her small hand, the sound of her soft voice seemed something

new and strange and beautiful to him ; and he could hardly fancy that he had known any thing like it ere then. The scene was gay and lovely ; and there were all those objects and sounds around which excite the imagination and make the heart beat high,—glitter and splendour, and wine and music, and smiles and beauty, and contagious happiness. The gay, light laugh, the ready jest, the beaming look, the glowing cheek, the animated speech, the joyous tale were there ; and ever and anon, through the open doors, burst a wild swelling strain of horns and flutes—rose for a moment over every other sound, and then died away again into silence.

What words De Coucy said, and how those words were said ; and what Isadore felt, and how she spoke it not, we will leave to the imagination of those who may have been somewhat similarly situated. Nor will we farther prolong the description of the banquet,—a description, perhaps, too far extended already—by detailing all the various yellow soups and green, the storks, the peacocks, and the boars ; the castles that poured forth wine, and the pyramids of fifty capons, which from time to time covered the table. We have already shown all the remarkable differences between a banquet of that age and one given in our own, and also some of the still more remarkable similarities.

At last, when the rays of the sun, which had hitherto poured through the high windows on the splendid banquet-table, so far declined as no longer to reach it, the old Count d'Auvergne filled his cup with wine, and raised his hand as a sign to the minstrels behind his chair, when suddenly they blew a long loud flourish on their trumpets, and then all was silent. “ Fair knights and ladies !” said the count, “ before we go to hear our troubadours, beneath our ancient oaks, I once more bid you welcome all ; and though here be none but true and valiant knights, to each of whom I could well wish to drink, yet there is one present to whom Auvergne owes much, and whom I—old as I am in arms—pronounce the best knight in France. Victor of Ascalon

and Jaffa ; five times conqueror of the infidel, in ranged battle ; best lance at Zara, and first planter of a banner on the imperial walls of Byzantium—but more to me than all—saviour of my son’s life—Sir Guy de Coucy, good knight and true, I drink to your fair honour!—do me justice in my cup :” and the count, after having raised his golden *hanap* to his lips, sent it round by a page to De Coucy.

De Coucy took the cup from the page, and, with a graceful abnegation of the praises bestowed upon him, pledged the father of his friend. But the most remarkable circumstance of the ceremony was, that it was Isadore’s cheek that flushed, and Isadore’s lip that trembled at the great and public honour shown to De Coucy, as if the whole embarrassment thereof had fallen upon herself.

The guests now rose, and, led by the Count d’Auvergne, proceeded to the forest behind the château, where under the great feudal oak, at whose foot all the treaties and alliances of Auvergne were signed, they listened to the songs of the various troubadours, many of whom were found among the most noble of the knights present.

We are so accustomed to look upon all the details of the age of chivalry as fabulous, that we can scarcely figure to ourselves men whose breasts were the mark and aim of every danger, whose hands were familiar with the lance and sword, and whose best part of life was spent in battle and bloodshed, suddenly casting off their armour, and seated under the shadow of an oak, singing lays of love and tenderness in one of the softest and most musical languages of the world. Yet so it was, and however difficult it may be to transport our mind to such a scene, and call up the objects as distinct and real, yet history leaves no doubt of the fact, that the most daring warriors of Auvergne—and Auvergne was celebrated for bold and hardy spirits—were no less famous as troubadours than knights ; and, as they sat round the count, they, one after another took the citharn, or the rote, and sung with a slight

monotonous accompaniment one of the sweet lays of their country.

There is only one, however, whom we shall particularize. He was a slight, fair youth, of a handsome but somewhat feminine aspect. Nevertheless he wore the belt and spurs of a knight; and by the richness of his dress, which glittered with gold and crimson, appeared, at least, endowed with the gifts of fortune. During the banquet he had gazed upon Isadore of the Mount far more than either the lady beside whom he sat, or De Coucy, admired; and there was a languid and almost melancholy softness in his eye, which Isadore's lover did not at all like. When called upon to sing, by the name of the Count de la Roche Guyon, he took his harp from a page, and sweeping it with a careless but a confident hand, again fixed his eyes upon Isadore, and sang with a sweet, full, mellow voice, in the Provençal or Langue d'oc, though his name smacked of more northern extraction.

TROUBADOUR'S SONG.

"My love, my love, my lady love !
Oh, what is like my joy ?
A star of heaven she's far above,
A flower is but a toy.

Her cheek is like the summer eves,
Before the sun goes down—
Faint roses, like the streaks he leaves,
Beneath night's tresses brown.

Her eye, itself, is like the star
That sparkles through the sky,
And lifts its diamond look afar
Before Day's blushes die.

Her lip alone, the new-born rose;
Her breath, the breath of spring;
Her voice is sweet as even those
Of angels when they sing.

A thousand congregated sweets
Deck her beyond compare;
And Fancy's self no image meets
So wonderfully fair.

I'd give my barony to be
Beloved for a day.
But, oh ! her heart is not for me !
Her smile is given away."

"By my faith ! she must be a hard-hearted damsel, then !" said old Sir Julian of the Mount, " if she resist so fair a troubadour.—But, Sir Guy de Coucy, let not the Langue d'oc carry it off entirely from us of the Langue d'oyl. So gallant a knight must love the lyre. I pray thee ! sing something for the honour of our trouvères."

De Coucy would have declined, but the Count Thibalt pressed him to the task, and named the siege of Constantinople as his theme. At the same time the young troubadour who had just sung offered him his harp, saying, "I pray you, beau sire, for the honour of your lady!"

De Coucy bowed his head, and took the instrument, over the strings of which he threw his hand in a bold but not unskilful manner ; and then, joining his voice, sung the taking of Zara and first siege of Constantinople ; after which he detailed the delights of Greece, and showed how difficult it was for the knights and soldiers to keep themselves from sinking into the effeminacy of the Greeks while encamped in the neighbourhood of Byzantium, waiting the execution of their treaty with the Emperor Isaac and his son Alexis. He then spoke of the assassination of Alexis, the usurpation of Murzuphlis, and the preparation of the Franks to punish the usurper. His eye flashed ; his tone became more elevated, and drawing his accompaniment from the lower tones of the instrument, he sung the Last Day of the Empire of the Greeks.

"Twas night, dark night ! and on the silent shore
Of the dim Bosphorus, the sullen roar
Of mighty waters was the only sound
That broke the silence of the air around.
'Twas night, dark night ! yet in the camp and fleet
Soft-footed sleep, her kisses light and sweet,
Had press'd upon no eyelids, and each knight
Gazed on the sable east, and long'd for light :
In arms they stood—and many a noble name
Look'd for the dawning morn as dawning fame ;
While each inspiring thought that men'ry yields,
And the dim shadow of a thousand fields,
Rose from the plains of Greece, and spread out fair
Visions of glory on the darksome air.
Up rose the sun, bright'ning each dome and tower
With the fresh splendour of morn's golden hour,

And fair Byzantium, like an Eastern queen,
 Smiled in her sunny loveliness serene :
 Her towers, her domes, her pinnacles, her walls,
 Her glittering palaces, her splendid halls,
 Show'd in the lustrous air like some sweet dream
 Wove by gay fancy from the morning beam."

The knight then went on to describe the shining but effeminate display of the Greek warriors on the walls, and the attack of the city by sea and land. In glowing language he depicted both the great actions of the assault and of the defence; the effect of the hell-invented Greek fire; of the catapults, the mangonels, the darts of flame shot from the walls, as well as the repeated repulses of the Franks, and the determined and unconquerable valour with which they pursued their purpose of punishing the treachery of the Greeks. Abridging his lay as he sang, he left out the names of many of the champions, and touched but slightly on the deeds of others. The heroic Doge of Venice, however, he could not refrain from noticing. "Lo!" he cried,—

"Lo! you old chief, you sightless hero, borne
 In battle's front, and never known to turn!—
 See ninety years upon his brow have cast
 The snowy burthen of the wintry blast;
 And yet the spirit of that heart sublime
 Has conquer'd age—end, conq'ring even time,
 Shall win old Dandolo immortal fame,
 And years unborn shall kindle at his name!"

With increasing energy at every line De Coucy proceeded to sing the mixed fight upon the battlements, after the Franks had once succeeded in scaling them: till the Greeks giving way, he concluded—

"Down stoop the coward Greeks before the blade;
 They turn—they faint—they fall—they fly dismay'd.
 In pour the Gallic bands; the flying foes
 Die recreant, base, beneath dishon'ring blows;
 France's broad standard glitters in the sun!—
 Shout! Host of Glory, shout!—Byzantium's won!"

All eyes were bent on De Coucy;—all ears listened to his lay. The language, or rather dialect, in which he sang, the Langue d'oyl, was not so sweet and harmonious as the Langue d'oc, or Provençal, it is true, but it had more strength and energy. The subject,

also, was more dignified; and as the young knight proceeded to record the deeds in which he had himself been a principal actor, his whole soul seemed to be cast into his song:—his fine features assumed a look between the animation of the combatant and the inspiration of the poet. It seemed as if he forgot every thing around, in the deep, personal interest which he felt in the very incidents he recited: his utterance became more rapid; his hand swept like lightning over the harp; and when he ended his song, and laid down the instrument, it was as if he did so but to lay his hand upon his sword.

A pause of deep silence succeeded for a moment, and then came a general murmur of applause; for, in singing the deeds of the Franks at Constantinople, De Coucy touched, in the breast of each person present, that fine chord called national vanity, by which we attach a part of every sort of glory gained by our countrymen to our own persons, however much we may recognise that we are incompetent to perform the actions by which it was acquired.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE existence of a monarch, without his lot be cast amid very halcyon days indeed, is much like the life of a seaman, borne up upon uncertain and turbulent waves. Exposed to a thousand storms, from which a peasant's cot would be sufficient shelter, his whole being is spent in watching for the tempest, and his whole course is at the mercy of the wind.

It was with bitterness of heart and agony of spirit that Philip Augustus saw gathering on the political horizon around many a dark cloud, that threatened him with a renewal of all those fatigues, anxieties, and pains from which he had hoped, at least, for some

short respite. He saw it with a wrung and burning bosom, but he saw it without dismay ; for, strong in the resources of a mind above his age, he resolved to wreak great and signal vengeance on the heads of those who should trouble his repose ; and, knowing that the sorrow must come, he prepared, as ever with him, to make his revenge a handmaid to his policy, and, by the punishment of his rebellious vassals, not only to augment his own domains as a feudal sovereign, but to extend the general force and prerogative of the crown, and form a large basis of power on which his successors might build a fabric of much greatness.

However clearly he might see the approach of danger, and however vigorously he might prepare to repel it, Philip was not of that frame of mind which suffers remote evil long to interfere with present enjoyment. For a short space he contemplated them painfully, though firmly ; but soon the pain was forgotten, and like a veteran soldier who knows he may be attacked during the night, and sleeps with his arms beside him, but still sleeps tranquilly, Philip saw the murmuring threatening of his great feudatories, and took every means of preparation against what he clearly perceived would follow : but this once done, he gave himself up to pleasures and amusements ; seeming anxious to crowd into the short space of tranquillity that was left him, all the gayeties and enjoyments which might otherwise have been scattered through many years of peace. Fêtes, and pageants, and tournaments succeeded each other rapidly ; and Philip of France, with his fair queen, seemed to look upon earth as a garden of smiles, and life as a long chain of unbroken delights.

Yet, even in his pleasures, Philip was politic. He had returned to Paris, though the summer heat had now completely set in, and June was far advanced ; and sitting in the old palace on the island, he was placed near one of the windows, through which poured the free air of the river, while he arranged with his beloved Agnes the ceremonies of a banquet. Philip was famous

for his taste in every sort of pageant; and now he was giving directions himself to various attendants who stood round, repeating with the most scrupulous exactness every particular of his commands, as if the very safety of his kingdom had depended on their correct execution.

While thus employed, his minister Guerin, now elected bishop of Senlis, though he still, as I have said, retained the garments of the knights of St. John, entered the apartment, and stood by the side of the king, while he gave his last orders, and sent the attendants away.

“Another banquet, sire!” said the bishop, with that freedom of speech which in those days was admitted between king and subject; and speaking in the grave and melancholy tone which converts an observation into a reproach.

“Ay, good brother!” replied Philip, looking up smilingly; “another banquet in the great *Salle du Palais*; and on the tenth of July a tournament at Champeaux.—Sweet Agnes! laugh at his grave face! Wouldst thou not say, dear lady mine, that I spake to the good bishop of a defeat and a funeral, instead of a feast and a *passe d’armes*? ”

“The defeat of your finances, sire, and the burial of your treasury,” replied Guerin, coldly.

“I have other finances that you know not of, bishop,” replied the king, still keeping his good-humour. “Ay, and a private treasury too, where gold will not be wanting.”

“Indeed, my liege!” replied the bishop. “May I crave where?” Philip touched the hilt of his sword. “Here is an unfailing measure of finance!” said he; “and as for my treasury, ‘tis in the purses of revolted barons, Guerin!”

“If you make use of that treasury, sire,” answered the bishop, “for the good of your state, and the welfare of your people, ‘tis indeed one that may serve you well; but if you spend it—” The bishop paused, as if afraid of proceeding, and Philip took up the word.

"If I spend it, you would say, in feasting and revelry," said the king, "I shall make the people murmur, and my best friends quit me.—But," continued he in a gayer tone, "let us quit all sad thoughts, and talk of the feast—the gay and splendid feast,—where you shall smile, Guerin, and make the guests believe you the gentlest counsellor that ever king was blessed withal. Nay, I will have it so, by my faith! As to the guests, they are all choice and gay companions, whom I have chosen for their merriment. Thou shalt laugh heartily, when placed between Philip of Champagne, late my sworn enemy, but who now becomes my good friend and humble vassal, and brings his nephew and ward, the young Thibalt, Count of all Champagne, to grace his suzerain's feast—when placed between him, I say, and Pierre de Courtenay, whose allegiance is not very sure, and whose brother, the Count of Namur, is in plain rebellion. There shalt thou see also Bartholemi de Roye and the Count de Perche, both somewhat doubtful in their love to Philip, but who, before that feast is over, shall be his humblest creatures.—Fie, fie, Guerin!" he added, in a more reproachful tone. "Will you never think that I have a deeper motive for my actions than lies upon the surface?—As to the tournament too, think you I do not propose to try men's hearts as well as their corslets, and see if their loyalty hold as firm a seat as they do themselves?"

"I never doubt, sire," replied the bishop, "that you have good and sufficient motives for all your actions: but this morning a sad account has been laid before me of the royal domains; and when I came to hear of banquets and tournaments, it pained me to think what you, sire, would feel, when you saw the clear statement."

"How so?" cried Philip Augustus. "It cannot be so very bad!—Let me see it, Guerin!—let me see it! 'Tis best to front such things at once.—Let me see it, man, I say!"

"I have it not here, sire," answered the bishop; "but I will send it by the clerk who drew it up; and

who can give you further accounts, should it be necessary."

"Quick then!" cried the king; "quick, good bishop!" And walking up and down the hall, with an unquiet and somewhat irritated air, he repeated, "It cannot be so bad! The last time I made the calculation, 'twas somewhere near a hundred thousand livres. Bad enough, in truth—but I have known that long!—Now, Sir Clerk," he continued, as a secretary entered, "read me the account, if it be as I see on wax. Was no parchment to be had, that you must draw the charter on wax* to blind me? Read, read!"

The king spoke in the hasty manner of one whose brighter hopes and wishes—for imagination is always a great helpmate of ambition, and, as well as its first prompter, is its indefatigable ally—in the manner of one whose brighter hopes and wishes had been cut across by cold realities; and the clerk replied in the dull and snuffling tone peculiar to clerks, and monstrously irritating to every hasty man.

"Accounts of the *Prévôt de Soissons*, sire," said the clerk: "receipts six hundred livres, seven sous, two deniers. Expenses: eighteen livres, to arm three crossbowmen; twenty livres to the holy clerk; seventy livres for clothing and arming twenty sergeants on foot. Accounts of the *Sénéchal of Pontoise*," continued the clerk, in the same slow and solemn manner: "Receipts, five hundred livres, *Parisis*. Expenses, thirty-three livres, for wax-tapers for the church of the blessed St. Millon; twenty-eight sous for the carriage to Paris of the two living lions, now at the kennel of the wolf-hounds, without the walls; twenty livres, spent for the robes for four judges; and baskets for twenty eels—for seventeen young wolves."

"Death to my soul!" cried the impatient king: "make an end, man!—come to the sum total! How much remains?"

* Later instances exist of wax having been used in the accounts of the royal treasury of France.

"Two hundred livres, six sous, one denier," replied the clerk.

"Villain, you lie!" cried the enraged monarch, striking him with his clenched fist and snatching the tablets from his hand. "What! am I a ~~beggar~~? 'Tis false, by the light of heaven!—It cannot be," he added, as his eye ran over the sad statement of his exhausted finances,—"it cannot surely be!—Go, fellow! bid the bishop of Senlis come hither!—I am sorry that I struck thee. Forget it!—Go, bid Guerin hither,—quick!"

While this was passing, Agnes de Meranie had turned to one of the windows, and was gazing out upon the river and the view beyond. She would fain have made her escape from the hall, when first she found the serious nature of the business that had arisen out of the preparations for the fête; but Philip stood between her and either of the doors, both while he was speaking with his minister, and while he was receiving the statement from the clerk; and Agnes did not choose, by crossing him, to call his attention from his graver occupation. As soon, however, as the clerk was gone, Philip's eye fell upon her, as she leaned against the casement, with her slight figure bending in as graceful an attitude as the Pentelican marble was ever taught to show; and there was something in her very presence reproved the monarch for the unworthy passion into which he had been betrayed. When a man loves deeply, he would fain be a god in the eyes of the woman that he loves, lest the worship that he shows her should lessen him in his own. Philip was mortified that she had been present; and lest any thing equally mortal should escape him while speaking with his minister, he approached and took her hand.

"Agnes," said he, "I have forgot myself; but this tablet has crossed me sadly," pointing to the statement. "I shall be no longer able to give festal orders.—Go you, sweet! and in the palace gardens, bid your maidens strip all the fairest flowers to deck the tables and the hall—"

"They shall spare enough for one crown, at least," replied Agnes, "to hang on my royal Philip's casque on the tournament-day. But I will speed, and arrange the flowers myself." Thus saying, she turned away, with a gay smile, as if nothing had ruffled the current of the time ; and left the monarch expecting thoughtfully the bishop of Senlis's return.

The minister did not make the monarch wait ; but he found Philip Augustus in a very different mood from that in which he left him.

"Guerin," said the king, with a grave and careful air, "you have been my physician, and a wise one. The cup you have given me is bitter, but 'tis wholesome ; and I have drunk it to the dregs."

"It is ever with the most profound sorrow," said the Hospitaller, with that tone of simple persuasive gravity that carries conviction of its sincerity along with it, "that I steal *one* from the few scanty hours of tranquillity that are allotted to you, sire, in this life. Would it were compatible with your honour and your kingdom's welfare, that I should bear all the more burthensome part of the task which royalty imposes, and that you, sire, should know but its sweets ! But that cannot be ; and I am often obliged, as you say, to offer my sovereign a bitter cup that willingly I would have drunk myself."

"I believe you, good friend—from my soul, I believe you !" said the king. "I have ever observed in you, my brother, a self-denying zeal, which is rare in this corrupted age ; or used but as the means of ambition. Raise not your glance as if you thought I suspected you. Guerin, I do not ! I have watched you well ; and had I seen your fingers itch to close upon the staff of power,—had you but stretched out your hand towards it,—had you sought to have left me in idle ignorance of my affairs—ay ! or even sought to weary me of them with eternal reiteration, you never should have seen the secrets of my heart, as now you shall—I would have used you, Guerin, as an instrument, but

you never would have been my friend. Do you understand me, ha?"

"I do, royal sir," replied the knight, "and God help me, as my wish has ever been only to serve you truly!"

"Mark me, then, Guerin!" continued the king. "This banquet must go forward—the tournament also—ay, and perhaps another. Not because I love to feast my eyes with the grandeur of a king—no, Guerin,—but because I would be a king indeed! I have often asked myself," proceeded the monarch, speaking slowly, and, as was sometimes his wont, laying the finger of his right hand on the sleeve of the Hospitaller's robe—"I have often asked myself whether a king would never fill the throne of France, who should find time and occasion fitting to carry royalty to that grand height where it was placed by Charlemagne. Do not start! I propose not—I hope not—to be the man; but I will pave the way, tread it who will hereafter. I speak not of acting Charlemagne with this before my eyes;" and he laid his hand upon the tablets, which showed the state of his finances. "But still I may do much—nay, I have done much."

Philip paused, and thought for a moment, seeming to recall, one by one, the great steps he had taken to change the character of the feudal system; then raising his eyes, he continued:—"When the sceptre fell into my grasp, I found that it was little more dignified than a jester's bauble. France was not a kingdom,—'twas a republic of nobles, of which the king could hardly be said to be the chief. He had but one prerogative left,—that of demanding homage from his vassals; and even that homage he was obliged to render himself to his own vassals, for feoffs held in their *mouvances*. At that abuse was aimed my first blow."

"I remember it well, sire," replied the Hospitaller, "and a great and glorious blow it was; for by that simple declaration that the king could not, and ought not to be vassal to any man; and that any feoff returning to the crown by what means soever, was no longer a feoff, but became *domaine* of the crown, you re-estab-

lished at once the distinction between the king and his great feudatories."

" 'Twas but a step," replied the monarch; "the next was, Guerin, to declare that all questions of feudal right were referable to our court of peers. The proud suzerains thought that there they would be their own judges; but they found that I was there the king. But to be short, Guerin, I have followed *willingly* the steps that *circumstances* imposed upon my father. I have freed the commons,—I have raised the clergy,—I have subjected my vassals to my court. So have I broken the feudal hierarchy;—so have I reduced the power of my greater feudatories; and so have I won both their fear and their hatred. It is against that I must guard. The lesser barons love me—the clergy—the burghers:—but that is not enough; I must have one or two of the sovereigns. Then let the rest revolt if they dare! By the Lord that liveth! if they do, I will leave the *domaines* of the crown to my son tenfold multiplied from what I found them. But I must have one or two of my princes. Philip of Champagne is one on whom words and honours work more than real benefits. He must be feasted and set on my right-hand. Pierre de Courtney is one whose heart and soul is on chivalry; and he must be won by tournaments and lance-breakings. Many, many others are alike; and while I crush the wasps in my gauntlet, Guerin, I must not fail to spread out some honey to catch the flies."

So spake Philip Augustus, with feelings undoubtedly composed of that grand selfishness called ambition; but at the same time, with those superior powers, both of conception and execution, that not only rose above the age, but carried the age along with him.

"I am not one, sire," said the minister, "to deem that great enterprises may not be accomplished with small means; but in the present penury of the royal treasury, I know not what is to be done. I will see, however, what may be effected among your good burgesses of Paris."

“Do so, good bishop!” replied the king, “and in the mean time, I will ride forth to the hermit of Vincennes. He is one of those men, Guerin, of whom earth bears so few, who have new thoughts. He seems to have cast off all old ideas and feelings, when he threw from him the corslet and the shield, and took the frock and sandal. Perhaps he may aid us. But, ere I go, I must take good order that every point of ceremony be observed in our banquet: I would not, for one-half France, that Philip of Champagne should see a fault or a flaw! I know him well; and he must be my own, if but to oppose to Ferrand of Flanders, who is the falsest vassal that ever king had!”

“I trust that the hermit may suggest the means!” replied Guerin, “and I doubt little that he will; but I beseech you, sire, not to let your blow fall on the heads of the Jews again. The hermit’s advice was wise, to punish them for their crimes, and at the same time to enrich the crown of France; but having now returned by your royal permission, and having ever since behaved well and faithfully, they should be assured of protection.”

“Fear not, fear not!” replied the king; “they are as safe as my honour can make them.” So saying, he turned to prepare for the expedition he proposed.

Strange state of society! when one of the greatest monarchs that France ever possessed was indebted on many occasions for the re-establishment of his finances, and for some of his best measures of policy, to an old man living in solitude and abstraction, removed from the scenes and people over whose fate he exercised so extraordinary a control, and evincing, on every occasion, his disinclination to mingle with the affairs of the world.*

But it is time we should speak more fully of a person whose history and influence on the people among whom he lived strongly develops the character of the age.

* The Chronicle of Alberic des Trois Fontaines gives some curious particulars concerning this personage, and offers a singular picture of the times.

CHAPTER IX.

KING PHILIP rode out of Paris attended like the monarch of a great nation ; but pausing at the tower of Vincennes, he left his men-at-arms behind ; and, after throwing a brown mantle over his shoulders, and drawing the *aumuce*,* or furred hood, round his face, he proceeded through the park on foot, followed only by a single page to open the gate, which led out into the vast forest of St. Mandé. When this task was performed, the attendant, by order of the monarch, suffered him to proceed alone, and waited on the outside of the postern, to admit the king on his return.

Philip Augustus took a small path that, wandering about amid the old trees, led on into the heart of the forest. All was in thick leaf ; and the branches, meeting above, cast a green and solemn shadow over the way. It was occasionally crossed, however, with breaks of yellow sunshine where the trees parted ; and there the eye might wander down the long, deep glades, in which sun and shade, and green leaves, and broad stems, and boughs, were all seen mingled together in the dim forest air, with an aspect of wild, original solitude, such as wood scenery alone can display.

One might have fancied one's self the first tenant of the world in the sad loneliness of that dark old wood ; so that, as he passed along, deep thoughts of a solemn, and even melancholy character came thick about the heart of the monarch. The littleness of human grandeur—the evanescence of enjoyment—the emptiness of fame—the grand and awful lessons that solitude teaches, and the world wipes out, found their moment then : and oh ! for that brief instant, how he hated

* The difference between the chaperon, or hood, and the aumuce was, that the first was formed of cloth or silk, and the latter of fur.—*Dic. des Franc.*

strife, and cursed ambition, and despised the world, and wished himself the solitary anchorite he went to visit !

At about half a league from the tower of Vincennes stood in those days an antique tomb. The name and fame of him whose memory it had been intended to perpetuate had long passed away ; and it stood in the midst of the forest of St. Mandé, with its broken tablets and effaced inscription, a trophy to oblivion. Near it Bernard the Hermit had built his hut ; and when the monarch approached, he was seated on one of the large fragments of stone which had once formed part of the monument. His head rested on one hand ; while the other, fallen by his side, held an open book ; and at his feet lay the fragments of an urn in sculptured marble. Over his head an old oak spread its wide branches ; but through a vacant space amid the foliage, where either age or the lightning had riven away one of the great limbs of the forest giant, the sunshine poured through, and touching on the coarse folds of the hermit's garments, passed on, and shone bright upon the ruined tomb.

As Philip approached, the hermit raised his eyes, but dropped them again immediately. He was known to have, as it were, fits of this sort of abstraction, the repeated interruption of which had so irritated him, that for a time he repaired to the mountains of Auvergne, and only returned at the express and repeated request of the king. He was now, if one might judge by the morose heaviness of his brow, buried in one of those bitter and misanthropical reveries into which he often fell ; and the monarch, knowing his cynical disposition, took care not to disturb the course of his ideas, by suddenly presenting any fresh subject to his mind. Neither, to say the truth, were the thoughts of the king very discordant with those which probably occupied the person he came to see. Sitting down, therefore, on the stone beside him, without giving or receiving any salutation, he remained in silence, while the hermit continued gazing upon the tomb.

“ Beautiful nature ! ” said the old man, at last. “ How

exquisitely fine is every line that thou hast chiselled in yon green ivy that twines among those stones!—Whose tomb was that, my son?"

"In truth, I know not, good father!" replied the king; "and I do not think that in all France there is a man wise enough to tell you."

"You mock me!" said the hermit. "Look at the laurel—the never-dying leaf—the ever, ever-green bay, which some curious hand has carved all over the stone, well knowing that the prince or warrior who sleeps there should be remembered till the world is not! I pray thee, tell me whose is that tomb?"

"Nay, indeed, it is unknown," replied the king. "Heaven forbid that I should mock you! The inscription has been long effaced—the name for centuries forgotten; and the living, in their busy cares, have taken little heed to preserve the memory of the dead."

"So shall it be with thee," said the old man;—"so shall it be with thee. Thou shalt do great deeds; thou shalt know great joys, and taste great sorrows! Magnified in thy selfishness, thy littleness shall seem great. Thou shalt strive and conquer till thou thinkest thyself immortal; then die, and be forgotten! Thy very tomb shall be commented upon by idle speculation, and men shall come and wonder for whom it was constructed. Do not men call thee Augustus?"*

"I have heard so," replied the king. "But I know not whether such a title be general in the mouths of men, or whether it be the flattery of some needy sycophant."

"It matters not, my son," said the hermit;—"it matters not. Think you, that if Augustus had been written on that tablet, the letters of that word would have proved more durable than those that time has long effaced? Think you, that it would have given one hour of immortality?"

* The name of Augustus was given to Philip the Second even in the earlier part of his lifetime, although Mézerai mistakenly attributes it to many centuries afterward. Rigord, the historian and physician, who died in the twenty-eighth year of Philip's reign, and the forty-second of his age, styles him Augustus, in the very title of his manuscript.

"Good father, you mistake!" said Philip, "and read me a homily on that where least I sin. None feels more than I the emptiness of fame. Those that least seek it very often win; and those that struggle for it with every effort of their soul die unremembered. 'Tis not fame I seek: I live in the present."

"What!" cried the hermit, "and bound your hopes to half a dozen morrows? The present! What is the present? Take away the hours of sleep—of bodily, of mental pain—of regrets for the past—of fears for the future—of all sorts of cares. And what is the present? One short moment of transitory joy—a point in the wide eternity of thought!—a drop of water to a thirsty man, tasted and then forgotten!"

"'Tis but too true!" replied the king; "and even now, as I came onward, I dreamed of casting off the load of sovereignty, and seeking peace."

The hermit gazed at him for a moment, and seeing that he spoke gravely—"It cannot be," he replied. "It must not be!"

"And why not?" demanded the king. "All your reasoning has tended but to that. Why should I not take the moral to myself?"

"It cannot be," replied the hermit; "because the life of your resolution would be but half an hour. It must not be, because the world has need of you.—Monarch! I am not wont to flatter, and you have many a gross and hideous fault about you; but, according to the common specimens of human kind, you are worthy to be king. It matters little to the world whether you do good for its sake or your own. If your ambition bring about your fellow-creatures' welfare, your ambition is a virtue: nourish it. You have done good, O king! and you will do good: and therefore you must be king, till Heaven shall give you your dismissal. Nor did my reasoning tend, as you say, to make you quit the cares of the world; but only to make you justly estimate its joys, and look to a better immortality than that of earth—that empty dream of human vanity! Still you must bear the load of sovereignty you speak of; and, by

freeing the people from the yoke of their thousand tyrants, accomplish the work you have begun.—See you not, that I, who have a better right to fly from the affairs of men, have come back from Auvergne at your call?"

"My good father," answered the king, "I would fain, as you say, take the yoke from the neck of the people; but I have not means. Even now, my finances are totally exhausted; and I sit upon my throne a beggar."

"Ha!" said the hermit; "and therefore 'tis you seek me? I knew of this before. But say, are your exigencies so great as to touch the present, or only to menace the future?"

"'Tis present—too truly present, my want!" replied the king. "Said I not, I am a beggar? Can a king say more?"

"This must be remedied!" replied the hermit.—"Come into my cell, good son! Strange! that the ascetic's frock should prove richer than the monarch's gown!—but 'tis so!"

Philip followed the hermit into the rude thatched hut, on the cold earthen floor of which was laid the anchorite's bed of straw. It had no other furniture whatever. The mud walls were bare and rough. The window was but an opening to the free air of heaven; and the thatch seemed scarcely sufficient to keep off the inclemency of the weather. The king glanced his eye round the miserable dwelling, and then to the ashy and withered cheek of the hermit; as if he would have asked, Is it possible for humanity to bear such privation?

The anchorite remarked his look, and pointing to a crucifix of ebony hanging against the wall, "There," cried he, "is my reward!—there is the reward of fasting, and penance, and prayer, and maceration, and all that has made this body the withered and blighted thing it is:—withered indeed! so that those who loved me best would not know a line in my countenance. But there is the reward!" And casting himself on his knees before the crucifix, he poured forth a long, wild

rhapsodical prayer, which indeed, well accorded with the character of the times, but which was so very unlike the usual calm, rational, and even bitter manner of the anchorite, that Philip gazed on him, in doubt whether his judgment had not suddenly given way under the severity of his ascetic discipline.

At length the hermit rose, and, without noting the king's look of astonishment, turned abruptly from his address to Heaven, to far more mundane thoughts. Pushing back the straw and moss which formed his bed, from the spot where it joined the wall, he discovered, to the king's no small surprise, two large leathern sacks, or bags, the citizen-like rotundity of which evinced their fulness in some kind.

“In each of those bags,” said the hermit, “is the sum of one thousand marks of silver. One of them shall be yours, my son; the other is destined for another purpose.”

It would be looking too curiously into the human heart, to ask whether Philip, who the moment before would have thought one of the bags a most blessed relief from his very unkingly distresses, did not, on the sight of two, feel unsatisfied that one only was to be his portion. However, he was really of too noble a disposition not to feel grateful for the gift, even as it was; and he was proceeding gracefully to thank the hermit when the old man stopped him.

“Vanity, vanity! my son,” cried he. “What need of thanks, for giving you a thing that is valueless to me?—ay, more worthless than the moss among which it lies. My vow forbids me either to buy or sell; and though I may use gold, as the beast of burden bears it—but to transfer it to another;—to me it is more worthless than the dust of the earth, for it neither bears the herbs that give me food, nor the leaves that form my bed. Send for it, Sir King, and it is yours.—But now, to speak of the future. I heard, by the way, that the Count de Tankerville is dead; and that the Duke of Burgundy claims all his broad lands. Is it so?”

“Nay,” replied the king, “not so. The Count de

Tankerville is wandering in the Holy Land. I have not heard of him since I went thither myself some ten years since: but he is there. At least, no tidings have reached me of his death.—Even were he dead,” continued the king, “ which is not likely,—for he went but as one of the palmers; to whom, you know, the soldan shows much favour; and he was a strong and vigorous man, fitted to resist all climates:—but even were he dead, the Duke of Burgundy has no claim upon his lands; for, before he went, he drew a charter and stamped it with his ring, whereby, in case of his death, he gives his whole and entire lands, with our royal consent, to Guy de Coucy, then a page warring with the men I left to Richard of England, but now a famous knight, who has done feats of great prowess in all parts of the world. The charter is in our royal treasury, sent by him to our safe-keeping about ten years agone.”

“ Well, my son,” replied the hermit, “ the report goes that he is dead.—Now, follow my counsel. Lay your hand upon those lands; call in all the sums that for many years are due from all the count’s prévôts and sénéchals; employ the revenues in raising the dignity of your crown, repressing the wars and plunderings of your barons, and—”

“ But,” interrupted the king, “ my good father, will not what you advise itself be plundering? Will it not be a notable injustice?”

“ Are you one of those, Sir King,” asked the hermit, “ who come for advice, resolved to follow their own; and who hear the counsels of others, but to strengthen their own determination. Do as I tell you, and you shall prosper; and, by my faith in yon blessed emblem, I pledge myself, that if the Count de Tankerville be alive, I will meet his indignation; and he shall wreak his vengeance on my old head, if he agree not that the necessity of the case compelled you. If he be a good and loyal baron, he will not hesitate to say you did well, when his revenues were lying unemployed, or only fattening his idle servants. If he be dead, on the other hand, this mad-brained De Coucy, who owes me his

life, shall willingly acquit you of the sums you have taken."

The temptation was too strong for the king to resist; and determining inwardly merely to employ the large revenues of the Count de Tankerville for the exigencies of the state, and to repay them, if he or De Coucy did not willingly acquiesce in the necessity of the case,—without, however, remembering that repayment might not be in his power—Philip Augustus consented to what the hermit proposed. It was also further agreed between them, that in case of the young knight presenting himself at court, the question of his rights should be avoided, till such time as the death of the Count de Tankerville was positively ascertained; while, as some compensation, Philip resolved to give him, in case of war, the leading of all the knights and soldiers furnished by the lands which would ultimately fall to him.

The hermit was arranging all these matters with Philip, with as much worldly policy as if he never dreamed of nobler themes, when they were startled by the sound of a horn, which, though at some distance, was evidently in the forest. It seemed the blast of a huntsman; and a flush of indignation came over the countenance of the king, at the very thought of any one daring to hunt in one of the royal forests, almost within sight of the walls of Paris.

The hermit saw the angry spot, and giving way to the cynicism which mingled so strangely with many very opposite qualities in his character—“O God!” cried he, “what strange creatures thou hast made us! That a great, wise king should hold the right of slaughtering unoffending beasts as one of the best privileges of his crown!—to be sole and exclusive butcher of God’s forests in France! I tell thee, monarch, that when those velvet brutes that fly panting at thy very tread heard afar come and lick my hand, because I feed them and hurt them not, I hold my staff as much above thy sceptre, as doing good is above doing evil! But hie thee away quick, and send thy men to search the forest; for, hark! the saucy fool blows his horn again,

and knows not royal ears are listening to his tell-tale notes!"

Philip was offended: but the vast reputation for sanctity which the hermit had acquired; the fasts, the vigils, and the privations which he himself knew to be unfeigned,—had, in that age of superstition, no small effect even upon the mind of Philip Augustus:—he submitted, therefore, to the anchorite's rebuke with seeming patience, but taking care not to reply upon a subject whereon he knew himself to be peculiarly susceptible, and which might urge him into anger, he took leave of the hermit, fully resolved to follow his advice so far as to send out some of his men-at-arms, to see who was bold enough to hunt in the royal chase.

This trouble, however, was spared him; for, as he walked back with a rapid pace along the path that conducted to Vincennes, the sound of the horn came nearer and nearer; and suddenly the king was startled by an apparition in one of the glades, which was very difficult to comprehend. It consisted of a strong gray mare, galloping at full speed, with no apparent rider, but with two human legs, clothed in crimson silk, sticking far out before, one on each side of the animal's neck. As it approached, however, Philip began to perceive the body of the horseman lying flat on his back, with his head resting on the saddle, and not at all discomposed by his strange position, nor the quick pace of his steed, blowing all sorts of *mots* upon his horn, which was, in truth, the sound that had disturbed the monarch in his conference with the hermit.

We must still remember, that the profound superstition of that age held, as a part of the true faith, the existence and continual appearance, in corporeal shape, of all sorts of spirits—"black spirits and white, blue spirits and gray," as the respectable old lady sings in Macbeth. It was also the peculiar province of huntsmen and other persons frequenting large forests to meet with these spirits; so that not a wood in France of any extent but had its appropriate fiend; and never did a chase terminate without some of the hunters sepa-

rating from the rest, and having some evil communication of the kind with the peculiar demon of the place.

Now, though the reader may have before met with the personage who, in the present case, approached the king at full gallop, yet as Philip Augustus had never done so,—and as no mind, however strong, is ever without some touch of the spirit of its age, it was not unnatural for the monarch to lay his hand upon his sword, that being the most infallible way he had ever found of exorcising all kinds of spirits whatever. The mare, however, aware that she was in the presence of something more awful than trees and rocks, suddenly stopped, and in a moment our friend Gallon the Fool sat bolt upright before the king, with his long and extraordinary nose wriggling in all sorts of ways on the blank flat of his countenance, as if it were the only part of his face that was surprised.

“Who the devil are you?” exclaimed the monarch; “and what do you, sounding your horn in this forest?”

“I the devil am nobody,” replied the jongleur; “and if you ask what I do here, I am losing my way as hard as I can.—Haw, haw!”

“Nobody! How mean you?” demanded Philip. “You cannot be nobody.”

“Yes, I am,” answered the juggler. “I have often heard the sage Count Thibalt d’Auvergne say to my master, the valiant Sir Guy de Coucy, that the intellect is the man. Now, I lack intellect; and, therefore, am I nobody.—Haw, haw! Haw, haw!”

“So thou art but a buffoon,” said the king.

“No, not so either,” replied Gallon. “I am, indeed, Sir Guy de Coucy’s tame juggler; running wild in this forest for want of instruction.”

“And where is now Sir Guy de Coucy,” demanded the king; “and the Count Thibalt d’Auvergne you speak of? They were both in the Holy Land when last I heard of them.”

“As for the Count d’Auvergne,” replied Gallon the Fool,—“he parted from us three days since to go to

Paris, to make love to the king's wife, who, they say, has a pretty foot. God help me!"

"Ha, villain!" cried the king. "'Tis well the king hears you not, or your ears would be slit!"

"So should his hearing spoil my hearing," cried the juggler; "but I would keep my ears out of his way. I have practice enough in saving them from my Lord Sir Guy; but no man has reached them yet, and shall not.—Haw, haw!"

"And where is Sir Guy?" demanded the king. "How happen you to have parted from him?"

"He is but now sitting a mile hence, singing very doleful ballads under an oak," replied the juggler. "All about the old man and his daughter.—Haw, haw! Sir Julian of the Mount and the fair Isadore.—Haw, haw, haw!—You know?"

"No, 'faith, fool! I know not," replied Philip. "What do you mean?"

"Why, have you not heard," said the juggler, "how my good lord, and my better self, and five or six varlets and squires conducted old Sir Julian and the young Lady Isadore all the way from Vic le Comte to Senlis, —and how we lost our way in this cursed forest,—and how my lord sent me to seek it? Oh, 'tis a fine tale, and my lord will write it in verse.—Haw, haw, haw! —and sing it to an old rattling harp; and make all the folks weep to hear how he has sworn treason against the king, all for the sake of the Lady Isadore.—Haw, haw, haw! haw, haw!" And placing his hand against his cheek, the juggler poured forth a mixture of all sorts of noises, in which that of sharpening a saw was alone predominant.

Philip called, and entreated, and commanded him to cease, and to tell him more; but the malicious juggler only burst out into one of his long shrill laughs, and throwing himself back on his horse, set it off into a gallop, without at all asking his way; at the same time putting the horn to his mouth, and blowing a blast quite sufficient to drown all the monarch's objurgations.

Philip turned upon his heel, and pursued his way to

Vincennes, and—oh, strange human nature!—though he saw that his informant was a fool—though he easily guessed him to be a malicious one, he repeated again and again the words that Gallon had made use of,—"Gone to make love to the king's wife!—sworn treason against the king! But the man's a fool, an idiot," added the monarch. "'Tis not worth a thought;" and yet Philip thought of it.

CHAPTER X.

In the days we speak of the city of Paris was just beginning to venture beyond the island, and spread its streets and houses over the country around. During the reign of Louis the Seventh, and especially under the administration of Suger, abbot of St. Denis, the buildings had extended far on the northern bank of the river; and there already might be seen churches and covered market-places, and all that indicates a wealthy and rising city; but in the midst of this suburb, nearly on the spot where stand at present the Rue Neuve and the Rue des Petits Champs, was a vast open space of ground, called the Champeaux, or Little Fields; which, appertaining to the crown, had been reserved for the chivalrous sports of the day. Part of it, indeed, had been given to the halls of Paris, and part had been enclosed as a cemetery; but a large vacant space still remained, and here was appointed the tournament of July, to which Philip Augustus had called all the chivalry of his realm.

It is not my intention here to describe a tournament, which has been so often done—and so exquisitely well done in the beautiful romance of Ivanhoe, that my relation would not only have the tediousness of a twice-told tale, but the disadvantage of a comparison with

something far better ; but I am unfortunately obliged to touch upon such a theme, as the events that took place at the *passe d'armes* of Champeaux materially affect the course of my history.

On one side of the plain extended a battlemented building, erected by the minister Guerin, and dedicated, as the term went, to the shelter of the poor passengers. It looked more like a fortress, indeed, than a house of hospitality, being composed entirely of towers and turrets ; and as it was the most prominent situation in the neighbourhood it was appointed for the display of the casques and shields of arms belonging to the various knights who proposed to combat in the approaching tournament. Nor was the effect unpleasant to the eye, for every window on that side of the building which fronted the field had the shield and banner of some particular knight, with all the same gay colours wherewith we now decorate the panels of our carriages. In the cloisters below, from morning unto nightfall, stood one of the heralds in his glittering tabard, with his pursuivants and followers, ready to receive and register complaints against any of the knights whose arms were displayed above, and who, in case of any serious charges, were either prevented from entering, or were driven with ignominy from the lists.

Side by side, on one of the most conspicuous spots of the building, as knights of high fame and prowess, were placed the shields and banners of Count Thibalt d'Auvergne and Guy de Coucy ; and the officers of arms, who, from time to time repeated the names of the various knights, and their exploits and qualities, did not fail to pause long upon the two brothers in arms ; giving De Coucy the meed over all others for valour and daring, and D'Auvergne for cool courage and prudent skill.

All the arrangements of the field were as magnificent as if the royal coffers had overflowed. The scaffoldings for the king, the ladies, and the judges were hung with crimson and gold ; the tents and booths were flut-

tering with streamers of all colours, and nothing was seen around but pageant and splendour.

Such was the scene which presented itself on the evening before the tournament, when De Coucy and his friend the Count d'Auvergne, whom he had rejoined by this time in Paris, set out, from a lodging which they occupied near the tower of the châtelet, to visit the spot where they were to display their skill the next day. A circumstance, however, occurred by the way which it may be well to record.

Passing through some of the more narrow and tortuous streets of Paris, and their horses pressed on by the crowd of foot-passengers who were coming from or going to the same gay scene as themselves, they could only converse in broken observations to each other, as they for a moment came side by side. And even these detached sentences were often drowned in the various screaming invitations to spend their money, which were in that day poured forth upon passengers of all denominations.

"Methinks the king received us but coldly," said De Coucy, as he gained D'Auvergne's ear for a moment, "after making us wait four days, too!—Methinks his hospitality runs dry."

"Wine, will you wine? Good strong wine, fit for knights and nobles," cried a loud voice at the door of one of the houses.

"Cresses!—fresh watercresses!" shrieked a woman with a basket in her hand.

"The king can scarce love me less than I love him," answered the count, in a low tone, as a movement of his horse brought him close to De Coucy.

"And yet," said his friend, in some surprise, "you, principally, determined your father to reject all overtures from the Count of Flanders, brought by Sir Julian of the Mount!"

"Because I admire the king, though I love not the man," replied Count Thibalt.

"Baths! baths! hot baths!" cried a man with a napkin over his arm, and down whose face the perspi

ration was streaming. "Hot! hot! hot! upon my honour!—Bathe, lords and knights! bathe! 'Tis dusty weather."

"Knight of Auvergne!" cried a voice close by, "those that soar high, fall farthest. Sir Guy de Coucy! the falcon was slain that checked at the eagle, because he was the king of birds."

A flush came into the cheek of Count Thibalt; and De Coucy started and turned round in his saddle, to see who spoke. No one, however, was near, but a man engaged in that ancient and honourable occupation of selling hot pies, and a woman chaffering for a pair of doves with another of her own sex.

"By all the saints of France!" cried De Coucy, "some one named us. What meant the fool by checking at the eagle? I see him not, or I would check at him!"

Count Thibalt d'Auvergne asked no explanation of the quaint proverb that had been addressed to him; but only inquired of De Coucy, whether 'twas not like the voice of his villain—Gallon the Fool.

"No!" replied the knight.—"No! 'twas not so shrill. Besides he is gone, as he said, to inspect the lists some half-hour ago."

In truth, no sooner did they approach the booths, which had been erected by various hucksters and jugglers, at the end of the cemetery of the Innocents, a short distance from the lists, than they beheld Gallon the Fool, with his jerkin turned inside out, amusing a crowd of men, women, and children with various tricks of his old trade.

"Come to me!—come to me!" cried he, "all that wants to learn philosophy! I am the king of cats, and the patron of cock-sparrows. Have any of you a dog that wants gloves, or a goat that lacks a bonnet? Bring him me!—bring him me! and I will fit him to a hair.—Haw, haw! haw, haw!"

His strange laugh, his still stranger face, and his great dexterity were giving much delight and astonishment to the people, when the appearance of De Coucy,

who, he well knew, would be angry at the public exhibition of his powers, put a stop to his farther feats ; and shouting “ Haw, haw ! haw, haw ! ” he scampered off, and was safely at home before them.

The day of the tournament broke clear and bright ; and long before the hour appointed the galleries were full, and the knights armed in their tents. Nothing was waited for but the presence of the king ; and many was the impatient look of lady and of page towards the street which led to the side of the river.

At length the sound of trumpets announced his approach ; and winding up towards Champeaux were seen the leaders of his body-guard—that first small seed from which sprung and branched out in a thousand directions the great body of a standing army. The first institution of these sergeants of arms, as they were called, took place during Philip’s crusade in the Holy Land, where, feigning or believing his life to be in danger from the poniards of the Assassins, he attached to his own person a guard of twelve hundred men, whose sole duty was to watch around the king’s dwelling. In France, though the same excuse no longer existed, Philip was too wise to dismiss the corps which he had once established, and which not only offered a nucleus for larger bodies in time of need, but which added that pomp and majesty to the name of king that neither the extent of the royal domains nor the prerogatives of sovereignty, limited as they were in those days, could alone either require or enforce.

Slowly winding up through the streets towards the Champeaux, the cavalcade of royalty seemed to delight in exhibiting itself to the gaze of the people, who crowded the houses to the very tops ; for, well understanding the barbarous taste of the age in which he lived, no one ever more feasted the public eye with splendour than Philip Augustus.

First came the heralds two and two, with their many-coloured tabards, exhibiting on their breasts the arms of their provinces. Next followed on horseback Mountjoy, king-at-arms, surrounded by a crowd of mat-

shals, pursuivants, and valets on foot. He was dressed in a sleeveless tunic of crimson, which, opening in front, displayed a robe of violet velvet, embroidered with *fleurs de lis*. On his head was placed his crown, and in his hand a sort of staff or sceptre. He was indeed, as far as personal appearance went, a very kingly person; and being a great favourite among the people, he was received with loud shouts of Denis Mountjoy! Denis Mountjoy! Blessings on thee, Sire Francis de Roussy!

Next appeared a party of the sergeants-at-arms, bearing their gilded quivers and longbows; while each held in his right hand the baton of his immense brazen mace, the head or ball of which rested on his shoulder. But then came a sight which obliterated all others—the king himself, mounted on a *destrier*, or battle-horse, as black as night, whose every step seemed full of the consciousness that he bore royalty. Armed completely, except the casque, which was borne behind him by a page, Philip Augustus moved the warrior, and looked the monarch; and the same man who had heard the hermit's rebuke with patience, ordered the preparations of a banquet like a Lucullus, and played with the roses in a woman's hair, now looked as if he could have crushed an empire with a frown.

Beside him, on a palfrey—as if for the contrast's sake—milk-white, rode the lovely Agnes de Meranie. All that is known of her dress is, that it also was white; for it seems that no one who looked on her could remark any thing but her exquisite beauty. As she moved on, managing with perfect ease a high-spirited horse, whose light movements served but to call out a thousand graces in his rider, the glitter, and the pageant, and the splendour seemed to pass away from the eyes of the multitude, extinguished by something brighter still; and ever and anon Philip Augustus himself let his glance drop to the sweet countenance of his queen, with an expression that woke some sympathetic feeling in the bosoms of the people; and a

loud shout proclaimed the participation of the crowd in the sensations of the king.

Behind the king and queen rode a long train of barons and ladies, with all the luxury of dress which was in that age as indispensable in the eyes of the fair on the occasion of a tournament, as in the present day for a ball or drawing-room. Among the most conspicuous of this noble train were Constance, Dutchess of Brittany, and her son, Arthur Plantagenet, of whose character and fate we shall have more to speak hereafter. Each great chieftain was accompanied by many a knight, and vavassour, and vassal, with worlds of wealth bestowed upon their horses and their persons. Following these again came another large body of the king's men-at-arms, closing the procession, which marched slowly on, and entered the southern end of the lists; after which, partly traversing the field, amid the shouts and gratulations of the multitude, the whole party halted at the foot of a flight of steps leading to the splendid gallery prepared for the king and queen. Here, surrounded by a crowd of waving crests and glittering arms, Philip himself lifted Agnes from her horse, and led her to her seat; while, at the same time, the trumpets sounded for the various knights to make, as had been previously arranged, a tour round the field, before proceeding to the sports of the day. Each as he passed by the royal gallery saluted the king and queen by dropping the point of his lance; and from time to time Agnes demanded the name of the different knights whom either she did not know, or whose faces were so concealed by the helmet as to render it difficult to distinguish them.

"Who is he, Philip?" demanded she, as one of the knights passed with the wivern in his casque, and the red scarf,—"who is he? He sits his horse nobly."

"'Tis Charles de Tournon," replied the king; "a noble knight, called the Comte Rouge. Here comes also Guillaume de Macon, my fair dame," added the king, smiling, "with a rose on his shield, all for your love."

“Silly knight!” said Agnes. “He had better fix his love where he may hope to win. But who is this next, with the shield sinople, bearing a cross, gules, and three towers in chief?”

“That is the famous Guy de Coucy,” replied the king; “a most renowned knight. If report speaks true, we shall see all go down before his lance. And this who follows, and is now coming up, is the no less famous Thibalt Count d’Auvergne;” and the king fixed his eyes upon his wife with a keen, inquiring glance.

Luckily, however, the countenance of Agnes showed nothing which could alarm a mind like Philip’s.

“Count Thibalt d’Auvergne!” cried she, with a frank, unembarrassed smile. “Oh! I know him well. He spent many months at my father’s court in going to the Holy Land. From him I first heard the praises of my Philip, long, long ere I ever entertained a hope of being his wife. I was scarce more than a child then, not much above fifteen—and yet I forgot not those praises. He was a dear friend too—that Count d’Auvergne—of my poor brother Alberic, who died in Palestine.” The queen added, with a sigh, “Poor Alberic! he loved me well!”

“The fool lied!” said Philip internally: “all is frank and fair. The fool lied!—and led me to slight a noble knight and powerful baron by his falsehood!”—and bending forward, as if to do away the coldness with which he had at first treated the Count d’Auvergne, he answered his salute with a marked and graceful inclination of the head.

“Is it possible?” cried Agnes, after the count had passed. “In truth, I should never have known him, Philip, he is so changed. Why, when he was at the court of Istria he was a fresh young man; and now he is as deadly pale and worn as one sick of the plague. Oh, what a horrible place must be that Holy Land!—Promise me, Philip, on all the Evangelists, never to go there again, let who will preach new crusades:—nay, promise me, my lord!”

“I do! I do! sweet Agnes!” replied the king: “once

in a life is quite enough. I have other warfares now before me."

After the knights had all passed, a short space of time intervened for the various arrangements of the field; and then, the barriers being opened, the tournament really commenced. Into the particulars of the feats performed, as I have already said, I shall not enter: suffice it that, as the king had predicted, all went down before De Coucy's lance; and that Count Thibalt d'Auvergne, though not hurried on by the same quick spirit, was judged, by the old knights, no way inferior to his friend, though his valour bore a different character. The second course had taken place, and left the same result; and many of the fair dames in the galleries began to regret that neither of the two companions in arms had been decorated with their colours; and to determine upon various little arts and wiles to engage one or other of the two crusaders to bear some mark of theirs in any subsequent tournament.

Thus stood the day, when the voices of the heralds cried to pause, much to the astonishment, not only of the combatants, but of the king himself. The barriers opened, and, preceded by a stout priest bearing a pontifical cross in silver, the Cardinal of St. Mary, dressed as *legate à latere*, entered the lists, followed by a long train of ecclesiastics.

A quick, angry flush mounted into the king's cheek, and his brow knit into a frown, which sufficiently indicated that he expected no very agreeable news from the visit of the legate. The cardinal, however, without being moved by his frowns, advanced directly towards the gallery in which he sat, and, placing himself before him, addressed him thus:—

“ Philip, King of France, I, the Cardinal of St. Mary's, am charged and commanded by our most holy father, the Pope Innocent, to speak to you thus—”

“ Hold, Sir Cardinal!” cried the king. “ Let your communication be for our private ear. We are not accustomed to receive either ambassadors or legates in the listed field.”

"I have been directed, Sir King," replied the legate, "by the superior orders of his holiness, thus publicly to admonish you, wherever I should find you, you having turned a deaf and contemptuous ear to the frequent counsels and commands of the holy church. Know then, King Philip, that with surprise and grief that a king of France should so forget the hereditary piety of his race, his holiness perceives that you still persist in abandoning your lawful wife, Ingerburge of Denmark!"

"The man will drive me mad!" exclaimed the king, grasping his truncheon, as if he would have hurled it at the daring churchman, who thus insulted him before all the barons of his realm. "Will no one stay him?"

Several of the knights and heralds advanced to interpose between the legate and the king; but the cardinal waved them back; and, well knowing that their superstitious veneration for his habit would prevent them from silencing him by force, he proceeded boldly with his speech.

"Perceiving also," continued he, "that, taking advantage of an unlawful and annulled divorce, weakly pronounced by your bishops, you have taken to your bed another woman, who is not, and cannot be, your wife!"—

A shriek from the women of the queen here interrupted the harangue of the prelate, and all eyes instantly turned upon her.

Simple surprise and astonishment had been the first emotion of Agnes de Meranie, at seeing any one bold enough to oppose a will that, according to all her ideas, was irresistible; but gradually, as she began to comprehend the scope of the legate's discourse, terror and distress took possession of her whole frame. Her eyes strained on him, as on some bad angel come to cross her young happiness; her lip quivered; the warm glow of her cheek waxed faint and pale, like the sunshine fading away from the evening sky; and, at the last terrible words that seemed to seal her fate for ever, she fell back senseless into the arms of her women.

The scene of confusion that ensued is not to be described.

“By the light of Heaven! old man!” exclaimed Philip, “were it not for thy gray hairs, I would strike thee dead!—Away with him! Let him speak no more!—Men-at-arms! put him forth from the lists! Away with him!—Agnes, my beloved!” he cried, turning to the queen, and taking her small hand in his, “awake, awake! Fear not, dear Agnes! Is your Philip’s love so light as to be shaken by the impotent words of any churchman in Christendom?”

In the mean while the sergeants-at-arms hurried the prelate and his followers from the lists, amid many a bitter taunt from the minstrels and trouvères, who feared not even then to attack, with the most daring satire, the vices of the church of Rome. The ladies of Agnes de Meranie pressed round their fair mistress, sprinkling her with all kinds of essences and perfumed waters; some chattering, some still screaming, and all abusing the daring legate, who had so pained the heart of their lovely queen, and put a stop to the sports of the day. The knights and barons, all united in the cause of the princess by every motive that had power in the days of chivalry—youth, beauty, innocence, and distress—shouted loudly, that they acknowledged her for their sovereign, the queen of all queens, and the flower of all ladies!

Philip Augustus, with royal indignation still upon his brow, caught gladly at the enthusiasm of his chivalry; and, standing forward in the front of the gallery, with the inanimate hand of his lovely wife in his left, and pointing to her deathlike check with the other, he exclaimed, in a voice that passed all over the field—“Knights and nobles of fair France! shall I suffer my hearth to be invaded by the caprice of any proud prelate? Shall I yield the lady of my love for the menace of any pope on earth? You, good knights!—you only can judge! and, by Heaven’s throne! you only shall be the judges!”

“Life to the king!—life to the king!—Denis Mount-

joy!—Denis Mountjoy!” shouted the barons, as if they were rallying round the royal standard on the battle-field; and, at the same time, the waving of a thousand scarfs, and handkerchiefs, and veils, from the galleries around, announced how deep an interest the ladies of France took in a question where the invaded rights of the queen came so home to the bosoms of all.

“Break up the sports for to-day!” cried Philip, waving his warder. “This has disturbed our happiness for the moment; but we trust our fair queen will be able to thank her loyal knights by the hour of four, when we invite all men of noble birth here present to sup with us in our great hall of the palace. For those who come too late to find a seat in the great hall a banquet shall be prepared in the tower of the Louvre. Till then, farewell!”

The fainting fit of Agnes de Meranie lasted so long, that it was found necessary to carry her to the palace in a litter, followed, sadly and in silence, by the same splendid train that had conducted her, as if in triumph, to the tournament.

In the mean while, for a short time, the knights who had come to show their prowess and skill, and those noble persons, both ladies and barons, who had graced the lists as spectators, remained in groups, scattered over the field and through the galleries, canvassing vehemently what had taken place; and not the most priestridden of them all did not, in the first excitation of the moment, declare that the conduct of both pope and cardinal was daring and scandalous, and that the divorce which had been pronounced between Philip and Ingerburge by the bishops of France ought to hold good in the eyes of all Frenchmen.

“Now, by the good Heaven!” cried De Coucy, raising his voice above all the rest, “she is as fair a queen as ever my eyes rested on; and though I cannot wear her colours, and proclaim her the star of my love, because another vow withholds me, yet I will mortally defy any man who says she is not lawfully Queen of France.—Sound, trumpets, sound! and you,

Sir Heralds, cry—Here stands Guy de Coucy in arms, ready to prove upon the bodies of any persons who do deny that Agnes Princess de Meranie is lawfully Queen of France, and wife of Philip the Magnanimous, that they are false and recreant; and to give them the lie in their throat, wagering against them his body and arms in battle, when and where they will appoint, on horseback or on foot, and giving them the choice of arms!"

The trumpets sounded, and the heralds who remained on the field proclaimed the challenge of the knight; while De Coucy cast his gauntlet on the ground. A moment's profound silence succeeded, and then a loud shout; and no one answering his call, De Coucy bade the heralds take up the glove and nail it on some public place, with his challenge written beneath; for payment of which service, he twisted off three links of a massive gold chain round his neck, and cast it to the herald who raised his glove; after which he turned, and, rejoining the Count d'Auvergne, rode back to throw off his arms and prepare for the banquet to which they had been invited.

"De Coucy," said D'Auvergne, as they passed onward, "I too would willingly have joined in your challenge, had I thought that our lances could ever establish Agnes de Meranie as Queen of France; but I tell you no, De Coucy! If the pope be firm, and firm he will be, as her father too well knows, Philip will be forced to resign her, or to trust to his barons for support against the church."

"Well!" cried De Coucy, "and his barons will support him. Saw you not how, but now, they pledged themselves to his support?"

"The empty enthusiasm of a moment!" replied D'Auvergne, bitterly; "which will be out as soon as kindled! Not one man in each hundred there, I tell thee, De Coucy, has got one spark of such enthusiasm as yours, which, like the Greek fire, flashes brightly, yet burns for ever; and as few of them the colder

sort of determination, which, like mine, burns without any flame, till all that fed it is consumed."

De Coucy paused. For a moment the idea crossed his mind of proposing to D'Auvergne a plan for binding all the barons present by a vow to support Philip against the church of Rome, while the enthusiasm was yet upon them ; but, though brave almost to madness where his own person was alone concerned, he was prudent and cautious in no small degree where the life and happiness of others were involved ; and, remembering the strife to which such a proposal even might give rise, he paused, and let it die in silence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE banquet passed, like the scene which followed the tournament, in enthusiastic assertions of the fair queen's rights, although she was not present. In this instance, Philip Augustus, all clear-sighted as he was, suffered himself to be deceived by his wishes ; and believed fully that his barons would aid him in the resistance he meditated to the usurped authority of the pope.

The promises, however, which wine, and wassail, and festivity call forth are scarcely more lasting than the feast itself ; and, without we can take advantage of the enthusiasm before it dies, and render it irrevocable by urging it into action, little can ever be gained from any sudden emotion of a multitude. If Philip doubted its durability, he did not suffer the shade of such a doubt to appear. The vaunt of every young knight he thanked as a promise ; and every expression of admiration and sympathy directed towards his queen he affected to look upon as a pledge to espouse her cause.

The Count Thibalt d'Auvergne was the only one that made neither boasts nor promises ; and yet the king, whether judging his mind of a more stable fabric

than the others, or wishing to counterbalance the coldness he had shown him on his first appearance at the court, now loaded him with honours ; placed him near him ; spoke to him on all those subjects on which he deemed the count was best calculated to speak ; and, affecting to consider his advice and assistance of great import, in arranging the relations to be established between the crown of France and the new French colony which had taken Constantinople, he prayed him to accompany the court to Compiègne, for which place it set out the next day.

The king's favour and notice fell upon the calm cold brow and dark thoughtful eye of Thibalt d'Auvergne like sunshine in winter, melting in no degree the frozen surface that it touched. The invitation, however, he accepted, saying, in the same unmoved tone, that he was anxious to see the queen, whom he had known in years long gone, and to whom he could give fresh news from Istria, with many a loving greeting from her father, whom he had seen as he returned from Palestine.

The queen, Philip replied, would be delighted to see him, and to hear all that he had to tell ; for she had never yet forgot her own fair country—nay, nor let that cankerworm of affection, absence, eat the least bit away of her regard for those she loved.

The very first, Count Thibalt took his leave and departed. De Coucy rose and was following ; but the king detained him for a moment, to thank him for the generous interest he had shown in his queen's rights, which had not failed to reach his ears. He then asked, with a slight shade of concern upon his brow, “ Is your companion in arms, *beau sire*, always so sad ? It grieves me, truly, to see him look so possessed by sorrow ! What is the cause thereof ? ”

“ By my faith ! my lord, 'tis love, I believe,” replied De Coucy ; “ some fair dame of Palestine—I wot not whether heathen or Christian, rightly ; but all I know is this :—Some five years ago, when he first joined us, then warring near Tyre, he was as cheerful a knight

as ever unhorsed a Saracen—never very lively in his mirth, yet loving gayety in others, and smiling often ; when suddenly, about two or three years after, he lost all his cheerfulness, abandoned his smiles, grew wan and thin, and has ever since been the man you see him."

The shade passed away from the king's brow ; and saying, " 'Tis a sad pity ! We will try to find some bright eyes in France that may cure this evil love,"—he suffered De Coucy to depart.

All that passed relative to the reception of the legate was faithfully transmitted to Pope Innocent III. ; and the very enthusiasm shown by the barons of France in the cause of their lovely queen, made the pontiff tremble for his authority. The immense increase of power which the bishops of Rome had acquired by the victory their incessant and indefatigable intrigues had won even over the spirit of Frederic Barbarossa, wanted yet the stability of antiquity ; and it was for this that Innocent III. feared, should Philip successfully resist the domination of the church even in one single instance.

There were other motives, however, which in the course of the contest about to be here recorded mingled with his conduct a degree of personal acrimony towards the King of France. Of an imperious and jealous nature, the pontiff met with resistance first from Philip of France ; and his ambition came only in aid of his anger. The election of the Emperor of Germany was one cause of difference ; Philip Augustus supporting with all his power Philip of Suabia ; and the pope not only supporting, but crowning with his own hands, Otho, nephew of John, King of England,—although great doubts and contestations existed in regard to his legitimate election.

As keen and clear-sighted as he was ambitious, Innocent saw that in Philip Augustus he had an adversary as intent upon increasing his own authority, as he himself could be on extending the power of the church. He saw the exact point of opposition ; he saw the

powerful mind and political strength of his antagonist ; but he saw also that Philip's power, when acting against his own, must greatly depend upon the progress of the human mind towards a more enlightened state, which advance must necessarily be slow and difficult ; while the foundations of his own power had been laid by ages of superstition, and were strengthened by all the habits and ceremonies to which the heart of man clings in every state, but more especially in a state of darkness.

Resolved at once to strike the blow, it happened favourably for the views of the pope that the first question where his authority was really compromised, was one in which the strongest passions of his adversary were engaged, while his own mind was free to direct its energies by the calm rule of judgment. It is but justice also to say, that though Innocent felt the rejection of his interference as an insult, and beheld the authority of the church despised with no small wrath, yet all his actions and his letters, though firm and decided, were calm and temperate. Still, he menaced not without having resolved to strike ; and the only answer he returned to the request of the Cardinal of St. Mary's for further instructions, was to call a council of the bishops of France, to excommunicate Philip as rebel to the will of the church, and to fulminate an interdict against the whole of the realm. So severe a sentence, however, alarmed the bishops of France ; and, at their intercession, the legate delayed for a time its execution, in hopes that by some concession Philip might turn away the wrath of the church.

In the mean while, as if the blow with which he was menaced but made him cling more closely to the object for whose sake he exposed himself, Philip devoted himself entirely to divert the mind of Agnes de Meranie from contemplating the fatal truth which she had learned at last. He now called to her mind the enthusiasm with which his barons had espoused her cause ; he pointed out to her, that the whole united bishops of France had solemnly pronounced the dissolution of his incomplete marriage with the Princess of Denmark ;

and he assured her, that were it but to protect the rights of his clergy and his kingdom from the grasping ambition of the see of Rome, he would resist its interference, and maintain his independence with the last drop of his blood.

At the same time, he strove to win her away even from the remembrance ; and he himself seemed almost to forget the monarch in the husband. Sometimes it was in the forests of Compiègne, Senlis, or Fontainebleau, chasing the stag or the boar, and listening to the music of the hounds, the ringing horns, and the echoing woods. Sometimes it was in the banquet and the pageant, the tournament or the *cour plenièr*, with all its crowd, and gayety, and song. Sometimes it was in solitude and tranquillity, straying together through lovely scenes, where nature seemed but to shine back the sweet feelings of their hearts ; and every tone of all summer's gladness seemed to find an echo in their bosoms.

Philip succeeded ; and Agnes de Meranie, though her cheek still remained a shade paler than it had been, and her soft eyes had acquired a look of pensive languor, had, or seemed to have, forgotten that there was a soul on earth who disputed her title to the heart of her husband and the crown of her realm. She would laugh, and converse, and sing, and frame gay dreams of joy and happiness to come, as had been ever her wont ; but it was observed that she would start and turn pale when any one came upon her suddenly, as if she still feared evil news ; and if any thing diverted her thoughts from the gay current in which she strove to guide them, she would fall into a long reverie, from which it was difficult to wake her.

Thus had passed the time of Philip Augustus and Agnes de Meranie from their departure for Compiègne, the day after the tournament. The hours of Count Thibalt d'Auvergne, however, had been spent in a very different manner from that which he had anticipated. He had, it is true, made up his mind to a painful duty ; but it was a duty of another kind he was called to

perform. As his foot was in the stirrup to join the royal cavalcade, for the purpose of proceeding to Compiègne, according to the king's invitation, a messenger arrived from Auvergne, bearing the sad news that his father had been suddenly seized with an illness, from which no hope existed of his recovery; and D'Auvergne, without loss of time, turned his steps towards Vic le Comte.

On his arrival, he found his parent still lingering on the confines between those two strange worlds, the present and the future:—the one which we pass through, as in a dream, without knowing the realities of any thing around us;—the other, the dreadful inevitability of which we are fond to clothe in a thousand splendid hopes, putting, as it were, a crown of glory on the cold and grimly brow of death.

'Twas a sad task to watch the flickering of life's lamp, till the flame flew off for ever! The Count d'Auvergne, however, performed it firmly; and having laid the ashes of his father in the earth, he staid but to receive the homage of his new vassals, and then turned his steps once more towards Paris, leaving the government of Auvergne to his uncle, the famous Count Guy, celebrated both for his jovial humour and his predatory habits.

CHAPTER XII.

We must now once more go back a little in our history and return to Sir Guy de Coucy, who, on the morning of his friend's departure for Auvergne, stood at the door of their common dwelling, to see him set out. In the hurry of such a moment, there had been no time for many of those arrangements between the two friends which the Count d'Auvergne much wished to have made. However, as he embraced De Coucy

at parting, according to the custom of the day, he whispered in his ear, "The besants we brought from the Holy Land are in my chamber. If you love me, De Coucy, remember that we are brothers, and have all things in common. I shall find you here at my return. If I come not soon, I will send you a messenger." De Coucy nodded his head with a smile, and, leaning on his large two-handed sword, saw the Count d'Auvergne mount his horse and depart.

"Farewell, D'Auvergne!" said he, as he turned to re-enter the house; "perhaps we may never meet again; but De Coucy forgets not thy generous kindness, though he will not use it. Our fortunes are far too unequal for us longer to hold a common purse."

Be it remarked, however, that the scruples which affected De Coucy on this occasion were rather singular in the age in which he lived; for the companionship of arms, which, in their romantic spirit, the knights of even a much later period often vowed to each other, were frequently of a stricter and more generous nature than any of our most solid engagements of life at present; involving, not only community of fortune and of fate, but of friendships and of enmities, of pleasures and pains, and sometimes of life or death.* When once two knights had exchanged arms, as was often the case, it became their duty to assist each other on every occasion, with body and goods, during the expedition in which they were engaged; and sometimes, even for life, to share all wealth between them, both present and to come; and in case of one dying, while under an engagement to do battle (or under a wager of battle, as

* * Ducange cites the following formula from a work I cannot meet with. The passage refers to a fraternity of arms between Mâjor, High Admiral of Sicily, and the Archbishop of Palermo.

"*Dictum est præterea quod si, juxta consuetudinem Siculorum, fratres fratres societatis contraxerint, seque invicem jurejurando astrinxerint ut alter alterum modis omnibus promoveret, et tam in prosperis quam in adversis unius essent animi, unius voluntatis atque consilii; quisquis alterum laderet, amborum incurreret offensam.*"

The same learned author cites a declaration of Louis XI. where he constitutes Charles Duke of Burgundy his sole brother in arms, thereby seeming to imply that this adoption of a brother in arms was restricted to one.—*Dissert. Ducange, xxi.*

it was called), his companion, or brother in arms, was bound to fill his place, and maintain his honour in the duel.

While in the Holy Land, cut off from frequent supplies, and in imminent and continual dangers, De Coucy had found no inequality between himself and Count Thibalt d'Auvergne ; but now, placed amid the ruinous expense of tournaments and courts, he resolved to break off at once an engagement, where no parity of means existed between himself and his companion.

Slowly, and somewhat sadly, De Coucy returned to his own chamber, feeling a touch of care, that his light heart had not often known before. "Hugo de Barre," said he, "give me a flask of wine ; I have not tasted my morning's cup, and I am melancholy."

"Shall I put some comfits in it, *beau sire?*" demanded the squire. "I have often known your worship get over a bad fit of love by a ladleful of comfits in a cup of Cyprus."

"As thou wilt, Hugo," answered the knight ; "but 'tis not love I want to cure now-a-day."

"Marry ! I thought, Sire Guy," replied Hugo de Barre, "that it was all for love of the Lady Isadore ; but then, again, I fancied it was strange, if you loved her, that you should leave her at Senlis, and not go on with her to her own castle, and strive to win her !"

"Her father was going to lodge with the Sire de Montmoreney, my cousin Enguerand's sworn foe," replied De Coucy ; "and even after that, he goes not home, but speeds to Rouen, to mouth it with John, king of England.—By my faith !" he added, speaking to himself, "that old man will turn out a rebel from simple folly. He must needs be meddling with treason, but to make himself important. Yet, D'Auvergne says he was a good warrior in his day. I wish I could keep his fingers from the fire, were it but for his daughter's love—sweet girl !"

Had De Coucy been alone, he would probably have thought what he now said, yet would not have spoken it ; but having begun by addressing his attendant, he

went on aloud, though the latter part of what he said was, in reality, merely a part of his commune with himself. Hugo de Barre, however, who had, on more than one occasion, been thus made as it were a speaking-block by his master, understood the process of De Coucy's mind, and stood silent till his lord had done.

"Then you do love the lady, beau sire?" said he at last, venturing more than he usually did upon such occasions.

"Well, well! Hugo; what is it to thee?" demanded De Coucy. "I will not keep thee out all night, as when I courted the Princess of Syracuse."

"Nay, but I love the Lady Isadore better than ever I did the Princess of Syracuse," replied the squire; "and I would stay out willingly many a night for her sake, so she would be my lord's true lady.—Look ye! my lord. You have seen her wear this bracelet of cloth of gold," he continued, drawing forth a piece of fine linen, in which was wrapped a broad band of cloth of gold, not at all unlike the bracelets of gilded wire lately so much the mode among the fair dames of London and Paris. "I asked one of her maidens to steal it for me."

"You did not, surely, Hugo!" cried De Coucy. "How dare you be so bold with any noble lady, sirrah?"

"Nay, then, I will give it back," replied the squire. "I had intended the theft to have profited your lordship; but I will give it back. The Lady Isadore, it is true, knew that her damsels took it; but still it was a theft; and I will give it back again. She knew, too, that it was I who asked it; and doubtless guessed it was you, beau sire, would have it; but I had better give it back."

"Nay, nay! good Hugo," replied De Coucy; "give it me. I knew not you were so skilful in such matters. I knew you were a good scout, but not in Sir Cupid's army.—Give it me!"

"Nay, beau sire; I had better give it back," replied

the squire ; “ and then I will fall into my duty again, and look for nothing but Routiers, Cotereaux, and the like. But there is something more I wished to tell you, sir : old Giles, the squire of the good Count Julian, told me, that if his lord keep his mind of going to Rouen, he must needs in three weeks’ time pass within sight of our own—that is to say, your own—castle. Now, would it not be fair sport to lay an ambush for the whole party, and take them prisoners, and bring them to the castle ?”

“ By my faith ! it would,” replied the knight. “ But how is this, Hugo ?—thou art a changed man. Ever since I have known thee, which is since I was not higher than my dagger, thou hast shown thyself as stiff and sturdy a piece of old iron as any of the corslets that hang by the wall ; and now thou art craving bracelets, and laying ambushes for fair ladies, as if thou hadst been bred up in the very palace of Love. Methinks that same damsel who stole the bracelet for thee must have woke up some new spirit in thy heart of stone, to make thine outward man so pliable. Why, compared to what thou wast, Hugo, thou art as a deer-skin coat to a steel plastron.—Art thou not in love, man ? Answer me !”

“ Something like, I fear me, beau sire,” replied the squire. “ And as it is arranged between me and Alix, that if you win the lady I am to have the maid, we are resolved to set our wits to work, to help your lordship on.”

“ By my life ! a hopeful plot,” replied De Coucy : “ and well do I know, Hugo, that the maid’s good word is often as much gained as the mistress’s smile.—But go, order to saddle ; leave the bracelet with me ; and as soon as the horses be ready, De Coucy will spur on for the home of his fathers.”

The squire delivered the bracelet to his lord, and left the apartment : and no sooner was he gone, than De Coucy carried the bracelet to his lips, to his forehead, and his heart, with as much fervour of devotion as ever monk showed for the most sacred relic of his church.

“ She knew that her damsel took it !—she knew that it was for me !” exclaimed he in an ecstasy of delight, which every one who can feel may have felt on discovering some such unlooked-for source of happiness. Stretching out his hand, De Coucy then took his rote, which, as a true trouvère, he made his inseparable companion. It was an age when poetry was a language—the real, not the figurative, language of love—when song was in the heart of every one, ready to break forth the moment that passion or enthusiasm called for its aid ;—and, in the acme of his gladness, he sang to it a ballad, composed, indeed, long before ; but the concluding verse of which he altered to suit his feelings at the moment.

SONG.

I.

“ I rode my battle-horse afar—
A long, a long and weary way ;
Fading I saw night’s latest star,
And morning’s prime, and risen day,
But still the desert around me lay.

II.

On, on, o’er burning sands I rode,
Beneath a red and angry sky ;
Burning, the air around me glow’d ;
My tongue was parch’d, my lip was dry ;—
I would have given worlds for the west wind’s sigh.

III.

With fever’d blood, and fiery eye,
And rent and aching brow, I go ;
When, oh the rapture to desiry
The palm-trees green, the fountain low,
Where willing waters sweetly flow !

IV.

Through life, as o’er that Syrian plain,
Alone I’ve wander’d from a child,
Thirsting for love, yet all in vain,
‘Till now when sweet and undefiled,
I find Love’s fountain in the wild.”

De Coucy sang, and then again pressed the token which he had obtained to his lips, and to his heart ; when suddenly a loud “ Haw, haw ! haw, haw ! ” startled him from his pleasing dreams, and he saw Gallon the Fool standing beside him.

“ Haw, haw ! ” cried Gallon ; my master’s turned

juggler, and is playing with scraps of gold riband, and singing songs to them. By my dexterity ! I'll give up the trade: the mystery is no longer honourable—every fool can do it."

"Take care that one fool does not get his ears slit," answered De Coucy. "Tell me, sir, and tell me truly,—for I know thee, Gallon, and that thou art no more fool than may serve thy turn,—where hast thou been since daybreak this morning ?"

"I went out on the road to Compiègne," replied Gallon gravely, "to see how the wolf looked in the sheepfold ; and whether the falcon comported himself sociably in the dove's nest. Farther, I sought to behold how the shepherd enjoyed the sight of sir wolf toying with the lamb ; and still farther—"

"Villain !" cried De Coucy, "what mean you ? Speak me no more apolagues, or your skin shall suffer for it ! What mean you, I say ?" and De Coucy suddenly seized the juggler by the arm, so as to prevent him from escaping by his agility, which he frequently did, from the blow which he menaced to bestow on him with his other hand.

"Well ! well !" cried Gallon, ever willing to say any thing that he thought might alarm, or mortify, or pain his hearers. "I went first, beau sire, to inquire of a dear friend of mine at the palace—who fell in love with me, because, and on account of, the simple beauty and grace of my snout—whether it be true, that Philip the Magnificent had taken actual possession of the lands of your aunt's husband, the Count de Tankerville ; and I find he has, and called in all the revenues to the royal treasury. Oh ! 'tis a great king and an expeditious !—Haw, haw, haw !" and though within reach of the young knight's arm, Gallon the Fool could not repress his glee at the sight of a slight shade of natural mortification that came over his lord's countenance.

"Let him," cried De Coucy,—"let him take them all ! I would rather that he had them than the Duke of Burgundy. Better they should go to strengthen a good king than to nourish a fat and overgrown vassal.—But you escape me not so, Sir Gallon ! You said you

went on the road to Compiègne to see how the wolf looked in the sheepfold ! Translate, Sir Fool ! Translate ! What meant you ?"

"Simply to see Count Thibalt d'Auvergne, and Queen Agnes de Meranie," replied the jongleur.—"Haw, haw !—Is there any harm in that ?"

De Coucy started as if some one had struck him, experiencing that sort of astonishment which one feels when suddenly some fact to which we have long shut our eyes breaks upon us at once, in all the sharpness of self-evidency—if one may use the word. " 'Tis impossible !" cried he. "It cannot be ! 'Tis not to be believed !"

"Haw, haw, haw !" cried Gallon the Fool. "Not to be doubted, *beau Sire* de Coucy !—Did he not join your good knighthood as blithe and merry as a lark, after having spent some three months at the court of Istria and Moravia ?—Did he not go on well and gayly till the news came that Philip of France had wedded Agnes de Meranie ? Then did he not, in your own tent, turn paler than the canvass that covered him ?—And did he not thenceforth wax wan and lack-witted, sick and sorrowful ?—Haw, haw ! haw, haw !"

"Cease thy grinning, knave !" cried De Coucy sharply, "and know, that even if he does love the queen, 'tis in ail honour and honesty ; as one may dedicate one's heart and soul, one's lance and song, to the greatest princess on all the earth, without dreaming aught to her dishonour."

"Haw, haw, haw ! haw, haw !" was all the answer of Gallon the Fool ; and darting away from the relaxed grasp of De Coucy, on whose brow he saw clearly a gathering storm, he rushed down, shouting, "Haw, haw ! haw, haw !" with as keen an accent of triumph, as if he had gained a victory.

"Is it possible ?" said the knight to himself, "that I have been blind for nearly two years to what has been discovered by an idiot on the instant ! God bless us all, and the holy saints !—D'Auvergne ! D'Auvergne ! I pity thee, from my soul ! for where thou hast loved,

and loved so fair a creature, there wilt thou still love, till the death. Nor art thou a man to seek to quench thy love in thy lady's dishonour—to learn to gratify thy passion and to despise its object as some men would. Here thy very nobleness, like plumes to the ostrich, is thy bane and not thy help.—And Philip too. If e'er a king was born to be jealous, he is the man. I would not for a dukedom love so hopelessly. However, D'Auvergne, I will be near thee—near to thy dangers, though not to thy wealth."

At this point, the contemplations of De Coucy were interrupted by the return of Hugo de Barre, his squire, informing him that the horses were ready; and at the same time laying down on the table before his lord a small leathern bag, apparently full of money.

"What is that?" demanded De Coucy.

"The ransom of the two knights' horses and armour overthrown by your lance in the yesterday's tournament," replied the squire.

"Well, then, pay the two hireling grooms," said De Coucy, "whom we engaged to lead the two Arabians from Auvergne, since we discharged the Lombards who brought them thither."

"They will not be paid, beau sire," replied the squire. "They both pray you to employ the hire which is their due in furnishing them with each a horse and arms, and then to let them serve under your banner."

"Well, be it so, good Hugo," replied the knight. "Where—God knows where I shall find food to cram their mouths withal! 'Twill add two, however, to my poor following. Then, with thee and the page and my own two varlets, we shall make seven;—eight with Gallon the Fool. By my faith! I forgot the juggler, who is as stout a man-at-arms as any among us. But, as I said, get thee gone with the men to the Rue St. Victor, where the haubergers dwell. Give them each a sword, a shield, a corslet, and a steel bonnet: but make them cast away those long knives hanging by their thighs, which I love not;—they always make me

think of that one wherewith that villain slave of a Ma-houn ripped up my good battle-horse Hero ; and would have slain me with it too, if I had not dashed him to atoms with my mace. Ride quick, and overtake me and the rest on the road : we go at a foot-pace." So saying, Guy de Coucy descended the narrow staircase of his dwelling ; and, after having spoken for a few moments with one of the attendants of Count d'Auvergne, who had remained behind, he mounted his horse, and rode slowly out of the city of Paris.

There is no possible mode of progression that I know of more engendering of melancholy than the foot-pace of a horse when one is alone. It is so like the slow and retarded pace which, whether we will or not, we are obliged to pursue on the highroad of life. Every object, as it rises on our view, seems such a long age in its approach, that one feels an almost irresistible desire at every other step to give the whip or spur, and accelerate the heart's slow beatings by some more rapid movement of the body. Did one wish to cultivate their stupidity, let them ride their horse at a walk over one of the long straight roads of France.

The face of the country, however, was in those days very different from what it is at present ; and the narrow earthy road over which De Coucy travelled wound in and out over hills and through forests : now plunging into the deep wood ; now emerging by the bright stream ; now passing for a short space through vineyards and fields, with a hamlet or a village by the roadside ; now losing itself in wilds and solitudes, where one might well suppose that Adam's likeness had been never seen.

The continual changing of the objects around took, of course, greatly from the monotony of the slow pace at which De Coucy had condemned himself to proceed, while in expectation of his squire's return ; and a calm sort of melancholy was all he felt, as he revolved in his mind the various points of his own situation and that of his friend the Count d'Auvergne.

In regard to himself, new feelings had sprung up in his bosom—feelings that he had heard of, but never

known before. He loved, and he fancied he was be loved ; and dreams, and hopes, and expectations, softer calmer, more profound than ever had reached him in camps or courts, flowed in upon his heart, like the stream of some deep pure river, and washed away all that was rude and light, or unworthy in his bosom. Yet, at the same time, all the tormenting contentions of hope and fear—the fine hair-balancings of doubt and anxiety—the soul-torturings of that light and malicious imp, Love, took possession of the heart of De Coucy ; and he calculated, within the hundred thousandth part of a line, how much chance there existed of Isadore of the Mount not loving him,—and of her loving some one else,—and of her father, who was rich, rejecting him, who was poor,—and of his having promised her to some one else ;—and so on to infinity. At length, weary of his own reasonings thereupon, and laughing at himself for combating the chimeras of his own imagination, he endeavoured to turn his thoughts to other things, humming as he went—

“The man’s a fool—the man’s a fool
That lets Love use him for a tool :
But is that man, the gods above,
Himself unused, who uses love ?

—And so will I,” continued De Coucy, mentally. “It shall prompt me to great deeds and to mighty efforts. I will go to every court in Europe, and challenge them all to do battle with me upon the question. I will fight in every combat, and every skirmish that can be met with, till they cannot refuse her to me, out of pure shame.”

Such were the determinations of De Coucy in the age of chivalry, and he was one more likely than most men to keep such determinations. They, however, like all resolutions, were of course modified by circumstance ; and in the mean while his squire Hugo rejoined him with the two varlets who had been hired in Auvergne to lead his horses, but who were now fitted to make a figure in the train of so warlike a knight.

Still the prospect of his cold and vacant home, with

no smile to give him welcome, and, as he well knew, nothing but poverty for his entertainment, sat somewhat heavily upon the young knight's heart. To lodge upon the battle-plain, under a covering that scarce excluded the weather ; to feed on the coarsest and most scanty food ; to endure all perils and privations for chivalry's, religion's, or his country's sake was nothing to the bold and hardy soldier, whose task and pride it was so to suffer : but for the *châtelain*, De Coucy, to return to the castle where his fathers had lived in splendour,—to the bowers and halls where his infancy had been nursed with tenderness,—and to find all empty and desolate ; the health and magnificence wasted in the thousand fruitless enterprises of the crusades, and the loved and familiar laid low in the melancholy dwellings of the gone, was bitter, sadly bitter, even for a young light heart and unquenchable spirit like his.

One of his ancestors, who, in the reign of Henry the First, had founded the younger branch of the De Coucys, of which he was now the sole representative, had done important services to the crown, and had been rewarded by the hand of Aleonore de Magny, on the Seine, heiress of the last *terre libre*, or free land, in France ; and this his race had maintained in its original freedom against all the surrounding barons, and even against the repeated efforts of every successive king who on every occasion attempted to exact homage by force, or to win it by policy. His father, indeed, before taking the cross, which he did at the persuasion of Louis the Seventh, had put his lands under the protection of the king, who, on his part, promised to guard its inviolability against all and every one ; and acknowledged by charter under his hand and seal that it was free and independent of the crown.

The *manoir* or *castel* of every baron of the time was always a building of more or less strength ; but it is to be supposed, of course, that the *château* attached to lands in continual dispute, was fortified with an additional degree of precaution and care. Nor was this wanting in the *château* of De Coucy Magny as it was

called: wall and battlement, tower, turret, and bartizan overhung every angle of the hill on which it was placed, and rendered it almost impregnable, according to the mode of warfare of those days.

When De Coucy had left it with his father's men-at-arms, though age had blackened it, not one stone was less in the castle-walls,—not a weed was on the battlements; and even the green ivy, that true parasite which sucks the vital strength of that which supports it, was carefully removed from the masonry.

But, oh! how fast decay speeds on, even by the neglect of ten short years! When De Coucy returned, the evening sun was setting behind the hill on which the castle stood; and, as he led his scanty band of horsemen up the winding and difficult path, he could see, by the rough, uneven outline of the dark mass before him, what ravages time had already made. High above the rest, the donjon, which used to seem proud of its square regularity, now towered with one entire angle of its battlements given way, and many a bush and shrub waving their long feathery foliage from window and from loophole; while the neglected state of the road, and even the very tameness of the wild animals in the woods near the château,—the hares and the deer, which stood and gazed with their large round eyes for many moments at De Coucy and his followers, before they started away,—told, with a sad moral, that man was seldom seen there.

De Coucy sighed as he rode on; and stopping at the gates of the barbican, which, thickly plated and studded with iron, opposed all entrance, wound a long blast upon his horn. A moment after, the noise of bolts and bars was heard, as if the doors were about to be thrown open; but then again came the sound of some old man's voice, exclaiming in a tone of querulous anger, "Hold, hold! Villain Calord! Will you give up the castle to the Cotereaux? Hold, I say! or I will break thy pate! I saw them from the beffroy. They are a band of Cotereaux. Go round to the serfs' sheds, and bid them come and take their bows

to the walls. Up you, and ring the bancloche, tha
we may have the soldiers from Magny!"

"Onfroy! Onfroy!" shouted De Coucy. "Open
your gates! 'Tis I, Guy de Coucy!"

"Your voice I know not!" roared the old man in
reply. "My young lord had a soft, sweet voice; and
yours is as deep as a bell, I know not your voice, fair
sir.—Man the walls, I say, Calord! 'Tis all a trick,"
he continued, speaking to his companion. "Sound the
bancloche!"

"If you know not my voice," cried De Coucy,
"surely you should know the blast I have sounded on
my horn!"

"Sound again, beau sire!—sound again!" cried the
old man. "I will know your blast among ten thousand,
if you be a De Coucy; and if you be my young lord,
I will know it in all the world."

De Coucy put his horn to his lips and reiterated his
blast, when instantly the old man exclaimed, "'Tis he!—
'tis he, Calord!—Open the gates—open the gates, quick!
lest I die of joy before I see his face again! 'Tis he
himself!—The Blessed Virgin, Queen of Heaven, be
praised for all things!—Give me the keys!—give me
the keys, Calord!" and no sooner were the doors
pushed back, than casting himself on his knees before
his lord's horse, with the tears of joy coursing each
other rapidly down his withered face, the old seneschal
exclaimed, "Enter, noble châtelain! and take your
own; and God be praised, my dear boy! and the Holy
Virgin, and St. John, and St. Peter, but more especially
St. Martin of Tours! for having brought you safe back
again from the dangers of Palestine, where your noble
father has left his valiant bones!—Here are the keys,
which I offer into your hand, beau sire," he continued,
looking earnestly at De Coucy, and wiping the salt
rheum that obscured his sight. "And yet I can scarce
believe," he added, "that young Guy, the last of the
three fair youths,—he who was not up to my shoulder
when he went, whom I first taught to draw a bow, or
wheel a horse—that young Guy, the page—and a

saucy stripling he was too,—my blessing on his wagish head!—that young Guy the page should have grown into so tall and strong a man as you, beau sire! —Are you not putting upon me? Was it truly you that blew that blast?” and his eye ran over the persons who followed behind his lord.—“But no!” he added, “it must be he! I know his blue eye, and the curl of his lip; and I have heard how he is a great knight now-a-days, and slays Saracens, and bears away the prizes at tournays:—I have heard it all!”

De Coucy calmly let the old man finish his speech, without offering to take the keys, which from time to time he proffered, as a sort of interjection, between the various parts of his disjointed discourse. “It is even I, good Onfroy,” replied he at last: “keep the keys!—keep the keys, good old man!—they cannot be in worthier hands than yours. But now let us in. I bring you, as you see, no great reinforcement; but I hope your garrison is not so straitened for provisions that you cannot give us some supper, for we are hungry, though we be few.”

“We will kill a hog—we will kill a hog, beau sire!” replied the old man. “I have kept chiefly to the hogs, beau sire, since you were gone, for they cost nothing to keep: the acorns of the forest serve them: and they have increased wonderfully! Oh, we have plenty of hogs; but as to ~~horses~~, and sheep, and things of that kind, that eat meat and profit little, I was obliged to abandon them when I sent you the last silver I could get, as you commanded.”

De Coucy signified his perfect indifference as to whether his supper consisted of mutton, beef, or pork; and riding through the barbican, into the enclosure of the walls, he crossed the court and alighted at the great gates of the hall, which were thrown open to receive him.

Calord, the servant or varlet of the seneschal, had run on before, to light a torch; for the day was beginning to fail, and the immense apartment was of its own nature dark and gloomy; but still, all within was

dim. The rays of the torch, though held high, and waved round and round, scarcely seemed to show some dark lustreless suits of armour hung against the walls: and the figures of some of the serfs, who had stolen into the farther extremity of the hall, to catch a glimpse of their returned lord, seemed like spirits moving about on the dark confines of another world; while more than one bat, startled even by the feeble light, took wing and fluttered among the old banners overhead. At the same time, as if dreary sounds were wanting to complete the gloominess of the young knight's return, the clanging of his footsteps upon the pavement of the empty hall awoke a long, wild echo, which, prolonged through the open doors communicating with untenanted halls and galleries beyond, seemed the very voice of Solitude bewailing her disturbed repose.

It all fell cold upon De Coucy's heart; and laying his hand on the old seneschal's shoulder, as he was about to begin one of his long discourses,—“Do not speak to me just now, good Onfroy!” said the young knight; “I am not in a vein to listen to any thing. But throw me on a fire in yon empty hearth; for, though it be July, this hall has a touch of January. Thou hast the key of the books too:—bring them all down, good Onfroy; I will seek some moral that may teach contentment.—Set down my harp beside me, good page.” And having given these directions, De Coucy cast himself into the justice-chair of his ancestors, and covering his eyes with his hands, gave himself up to no very sweet contemplations.

CHAPTER XIII.

IT would seem a strange command in our day were any one to order his servant to bring down the library, and certainly would infer a much more operose under-

taking than fell to the lot of old Onfroy the seneschal, who, while ~~Lord~~, his man, cast almost a whole tree in the chimney, and the varlets of De Coucy unloaded his baggage-horses, easily brought down a small wooden box, containing the whole literature of the château. And yet, perhaps, had not the De Coucys from father to son been distinguished trouvères, no such treasure of letters would their castle have contained; for, to count the nobles of the kingdom throughout, scarce one in a hundred could read and write.

De Coucy, however, had wasted—as it was then called—some of his earlier years in the study of profane literature, till the death of his two elder brothers had called him from such pursuits; from which time his whole course of reading had been in the romances of the day, where figured either Charlemagne with his peers and paladins, or the heroes, writers, and philosophers of antiquity, all mingled together, and habited as knights and magicians.

A manuscript, however, in those days, was of course much more precious in the eyes of those who could read than such a thing possibly can be now; and De Coucy, hoping, as many have done since, to shelter himself behind a book from the sharp attacks of unpleasant thought, eagerly opened the manifold bars and bucklings of the wooden case, and took out the first vellum that his hand fell upon. This proved to be but a collection of tensons, lais, and pastourelles, all of which he knew by heart, so that he was obliged to search farther. The next he came to had nearly shared the same fate, being a copy of the Life of Louis the Fat, written in Latin a few years before, by Suger, abbot of St. Denis. The Latin, however, was easy; and De Coucy's erudition coming to his aid, he read various passages from those various pages, wherein the great minister who wrote it gives such animated pictures of all that passed immediately previous to the very age and scenes amid which the young knight was then living. At length his eye rested on the epigraph of the sixteenth chapter, “Concerning” .

treachery committed at the Roche Guyon, by William, brother-in-law of the king; concerning also the death of Guy; and the speedy vengeance that overtook William."

No title could have been more attractive in the eyes of De Coucy; and skipping very little of his text, where his remembrance of the language failed him, he went on to read.

"Upon a promontory formed by the great river Seine, at a spot difficult of access, is built an ignoble castle, of a frightful aspect, called La Roche Guyon. On the surface of the promontory the castle is invisible, being hollowed out of the bowels of the high rock. The skilful hand of him who formed it has cut the high rock itself on the side of the hill, and by a mean and narrow opening has practised a subterranean habitation of immense extent. * * * * *

"This subterranean castle, not more hideous in the sight of men than in the sight of God, had about this time for its lord Guy de la Roche Guyon, a young man of gentle manners, a stranger to the wickedness of his ancestors. He had, indeed, interrupted its course, and showed himself resolved to lead a tranquil and honourable life, free from their infamous and greedy rapacity.

"Surprised by the very position of his wretched castle, and massacred by the treachery of his own father-in-law, the most wicked of the wicked, he lost by an unexpected blow both his dwelling and his life.

"William, his father-in-law, was by birth a Norman; and, unequalled in treachery, he made himself appear the dearest friend of his daughter's husband. This man, tormented by black envy, and brewing wicked designs, unhappily found, on the evening of a certain Sunday, an opportunity of executing his diabolical designs. He came, then, with his arms covered with a mantle, and accompanied by a handful of assassins; and mingled himself, though with very different thoughts, among a crowd of pious people hastening to a church, which communicated by passage in the rock with the subterranean castle of Guy. For some time, while the

rest gave themselves up to prayer, he feigned to pray also ; but, in truth, occupied himself in examining attentively the passage communicating with the dwelling of his son-in-law. At that moment Guy entered the church ; when, drawing his sword, and seconded by his criminal associates, William, madly yielding to the iniquity of his heart, cast himself into the doorway, and struck down his son-in-law, who was already smiling a welcome upon him, when he felt the edge of his sword. The noble bride of the châtelain, stupified at the sight, tore her hair and her cheeks, after the manner of women in their anger, and running towards her husband, without fearing the fate that menaced her, she cast herself upon him to cover his body from the blows of the murderer, crying, while she received a thousand wounds, ‘Vile butchers ! slay me rather than him ! —What has he done to merit death ?’ * * * *

“ Seizing her by the hair the assassins dragged her away from her husband, who, crushed by their repeated blows, pierced by their swords, and almost torn in pieces with his various wounds, soon expired under their hands. Not contented yet, with a degree of cruelty worthy of Herod, such of his unhappy children as they could find, they dashed mercilessly against the rock—”*

“ Give me my lance !” cried De Coucy, starting up, with his blood boiling at this picture of an age so near his own,—“ give me my lance, ho ! By all the saints of France—”

But at that moment remembering that the event which Suger recounted must have taken place full fifty years before, and, therefore, that none of the actors therein could be a fit object for the vengeance which he had meditated inflicting with his own hand, he sat down again, and read out the tale, running rapidly through the murderer’s first triumphant contemplation of the property he had obtained by the death of his

* This singular picture of the barbarism of the age immediately preceding that of Philip Augustus is rendered as literally as possible from the Life of Louis le Gros, by Suger, abbot of St. Denis.

son-in-law, and even of his own daughter; but pausing with an angry sort of gladness over the detail of the signal punishment inflicted on him and his accomplices. Nor did he find the barbarous aggravation of tearing his heart from his bosom, and casting his body, attached to a plank, into the river Seine, to float to his native place, in any degree too horrible an award for so horrible a villain. On the contrary, starting from his chair, with all the circumstances of his own fate forgot, he was striding up and down the hall, wishing that this same bloodthirsty Guillaume had been alive then to meet him in fight; when, suddenly, just as the old seneschal was bustling in to lay out the table for his young lord's supper, the long, loud blast of a horn sounded at the outer gates.

“ Throw open the gates, and see who is there ! ” cried De Coucy. “ By the blessed rood ! I have visitors early ! ”

“ In the Holy Virgin's name ! beau sire, open not the gates to-night ! ” cried the old seneschal. “ You do not know what you do. All the neighbouring barons have driven the Cotereaux off their own lands on to yours, because it is here a *terre libre*; and there are at least two thousand in the woods round about. Be ruled. Sir Guy ! be ruled ! ”

“ Ha, say you ? ” cried De Coucy. “ But how is it, good Onfroy, that you can then drive out the swine you speak of, to feed in the forest ? ”

“ Because—because—because, beau sire,” replied the old man, hesitating, as if he feared the effect of his answer,—“ because I agreed with their chief, that if he and his would never show themselves within half a league of the castle I would pay him a tribute of two fat hogs monthly.

“ A tribute ! ” thundered De Coucy, striking his clenched fist upon the table, “ a tribute ! ” Then suddenly lowering his voice, he added, “ Oh, my good Onfroy ! what are the means of a De Coucy shrunk to, that his castle, in his absence even, should pay a tribute to thieves and pickpurses ! How many able

serfs have you within the walls? I know your power was small. How many?"

"But nine good men, and three old ones," replied the seneschal, shaking his head sadly; "and they are but serfs, you know, my lord,—I am but weakling, now-a-day; and Calord, though a freeman, has known no service."

"And how many vassals bound to furnish a man?" demanded De Coucy. "Throw open the gates, I say!" he continued, turning fiercely upon Calord, while the horn sounded again. "I would fain see the Coterel who should dare to take two steps in this hall with Guy de Coucy standing by his own hearth. How many vassals, Onfroy?"

"But seven, beau sire," replied the old man, looking from time to time towards the door of the hall, which led out into the court, and which Calord had left open behind him,—"but seven, Sir Guy; and they are only bound to a forty days' riding in the time of war."

"And now, tell me, Onfroy," continued De Coucy, standing as calmly with his back towards the door as if he had been surrounded by a host of friends. "If you have paid this tribute, why are you now afraid of these thieves?"

"Because, Sir Guy," replied the seneschal, "the last month's hogs have not been sent; there being soldiers of the king's down at the town, within sound of the bancloche.—But see, Sir Guy! see! they are pouring into the court! I told you how 'twould be!—See, see!—torches and all! Well, one can die now, as well as a week hence!"

De Coucy turned, and at first the number of horsemen that were filing into the court, two at a time, as they mounted the steep and narrow road, almost induced him to bid the gates be shut, that he might deal with them with some equality: but a second glance changed his purpose, for though here and there was to be seen a haubert or a plastron glistening in the torch-light, by far the greater part of the horsemen were in the garb of peace.

"These are no Cotereaux, good Onfroy," said he, staying the old seneschal, who was in the act of drawing down from the wall some rusty monument of wars long gone. "These are peaceable guests, and must be as well treated as we may. For the Cotereaux, I will take order with them before I be two days older; and they shall find the woods of De Coucy Magny too hot a home for summer weather.—Who is it seeks De Coucy?" he continued, advancing as he saw one of the cavalcade dismounting at the hall-door.

"Guillaume de la Roche Guyon," replied the stranger, walking forward into the hall; while De Coucy, with his mind full of all he had just been reading connected with that name, instinctively started back, and laid his hand on his dagger; but, instantly remembering himself, he advanced to meet the cavalier, and welcomed him to the château.

The stranger was a slight young man, without other arms than his sword; but he wore knightly spurs and belt, and in the front of his hat appeared the form of a grasshopper, beautifully modelled in gold. His features had instantly struck De Coucy as being familiar to him; but it was principally this little emblem, joined with a silk scarf hanging from his neck, that fully recalled to his mind the young troubadour he had seen at the château of Vic le Comte.

"I crave your hospitality, *beau sire*, for myself and train," said the young stranger. "Hardly acquainted with this part of fair France, for my greater feoffs lie in sweet Provence, I have lost my way in these forests.—But methinks we have met before, noble châtelain;" and as he recognised De Coucy, a slight degree of paleness spread over the youth's face.

De Coucy, however, remarked it not; and, of those generous natures from whose hearts resentments pass like clouds from the summer sun, he forgot entirely a slight feeling of jealousy which the young troubadour had excited in his bosom while at Vic le Comte; and, instead of wishing, as he had then done, to have him

face to face in deadly arms, he welcomed him to his château with every hospitable greeting.

“ ‘Tis but an hour since I arrived myself, good knight,” said he ; “ and after a ten years’ absence, my castle is scantily furnished for the reception of such an honourable guest. But see thou servest us the best of all we have, Onfroy, and speedily.”

“ Haw, haw ! haw, haw ! ” cried Gallon the Fool, with his head protruded through one of the doors,— “ haw, haw ! The lion feasted the fox, and the fox got the best of the dinner.”

“ I will make thee juggle till thy limbs ache,” said De Coucy, “ this very night, Sir Gallon ; so will I punish thine insolence.— ‘Tis a juggler slave, *beau sire*,” he continued, turning to Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, who gazed with some astonishment at the juggler’s apparition. “ I bought him of the Infidels, into whose power he had fallen several years ago. He must have been once a shrewd-witted knave, and wants not sense now when he chooses to employ it ; but for some trick he played his miscreant master, the Saracen tied him by the legs to his horse’s tail one day, and dragged him a good league across the sands to sell him at our camp, in time of truce. Poor Gallon himself says his brain was then turned the wrong way, and has never got right again since, so that he breaks his sour jests on every one.”

The tables were soon spread, and the provisions, which indeed consisted of little else than pork, or *bacon*, as it was then called in France, with the addition of two unfortunate fowls, doomed to suffer for their lord’s return, were laid out in various trenchers all the way down the middle of the board. De Coucy and his guest took their places, side by side, at the top ; and all the free men in the train of either, were ranged along the sides. No fine *dressoir*, covered with silver and with gold, ornamented the hall of the young knight ; all the plate which the crusades had left in his castle consisting of two large hanaps, or drinking-

cups, of silver, and a saltcellar in the form of a ship. Jugs of earthenware and cups of horn lay ranged by platters of wood and pewter ; and a momentary sting of mortified pride passed through De Coucy's heart, as the poverty of his house stood exposed to the eyes of the young troubadour.

For his part, however, Guillaume de la Roche seemed perfectly contented with his fare and reception ; praised the wine, which was indeed excellent, and evinced a traveller's appetite towards the hot steaks of pork and the freshly slaughtered fowls.

Gradually De Coucy began to feel more at his ease, and, forgetting the poverty of his household display, laughed and jested with his guest. Pledging each other in many a cup, and at last adding thereto many a song, the hours passed rapidly away. Gallon the Fool was called ; and a stiff cord being stretched across the apartment, he performed feats thereon that would have broken the heart of Il Diavolo Antonio himself, adding flavour and piquancy to the various contortions of his limbs by the rich and racy ugliness of his countenance.

" That cannot be his real nose ?" observed the young Provençal, turning with an inquiring look to De Coucy.

" By all the saints of Heaven ! it is," replied De Coucy ; " at least, I have seen him with no other."

" It cannot be !" said the troubadour, almost in the words of Slawkenbergius. " There never was a nose like that ! 'Tis surely a sausage of Bijorre—both shape, and colour, and size. I will never believe it to be a true nose !"

" Ho ! Gallon," cried De Coucy. " Bring thy nose here, and convince this fair knight that 'tis thine own lawful property."

Gallon obeyed ; and, jumping down from his rope, approached the place where the two knights sat, swaying his proboscis up and down in such a manner as to show that it was almost preternaturally under the command of his volition.

This, however, did not satisfy the young Provençal,

who, as he came nearer, was seized with an irresistible desire to meddle with the strange appendix to the jongleur's face ; and, giving way to this sort of boyish whim, at the moment when Gallon was nearest, he seized his nose between his finger and thumb, and gave it a tweak fully sufficient to demonstrate its identity with the rest of his flesh.

Gallon's hand flew to his dagger ; and it was already gleaming half out of the sheath, when a loud " How now ! " from De Coucy stayed him ; and affecting to take the matter as a joke, he threw a somerset backwards, and bounded out of the hall.

" I could not have resisted, had he been an emperor ! " said the young man, laughing. " Oh 'tis a wonderful appendage, and gives great dignity to his countenance ! "

" The dignity of ugliness," said De Coucy. " But take care that Gallon the Fool comes not across you with his dagger. He is as revengeful as an ape."

" Oh, I will give him some gold," said the troubadour. " One touch of such a nose as that is worth all the shackles of Solomon's temple."

De Coucy laughed, and the evening passed on in uninterrupted glee and harmony : but when the young knight found that his new companion was the grandson of the unfortunate Guy de la Roche Guyon, the account of whose assassination he had just read, his heart seemed to open to him more than ever ; and telling him, with a smile at the remembrance of having called for his lance, how much the history had moved him, Guy de Coucy poured forth his free and generous heart in professions of interest and regard. The young stranger seemed to meet him as frankly ; but, to a close observer perhaps, the very rounding of his phrases would have betrayed more study than was consistent with the same effusion of feeling which flowed in all De Coucy's actions.

The châtelain, however, did not remark it ; but after having commanded a sleeping cup to be brought to the young Provençal's bedroom, he led him thither him-

self. Here, indeed, his pride was somewhat gratified to find that the old seneschal had preserved the sleeping apartments with the most heedful care from the same decay that had affected the rest of the castle, and that the rich tapestries over the walls, the hangings of the bed, and its coverings of miniver and sable, attested that the family of De Coucy Magny had once at least known days of splendour.

The next morning, by sunrise, the whole party in the castle were stirring; and Guillaume de la Roche Guyon gave orders to prepare his horses. De Coucy pressed his stay, but could not prevail; and after having adduced a thousand motives to induce his guest to prolong his visit, he added one, which to his mind was irresistible. "I find," said he, "that during my absence, fighting for the recovery of Christ's cross and sepulchre, a band of lawless *Routiers* and *Cotereaux* have refuged themselves in my woods—some two thousand, they are called; but let us strike off one-half for exaggeration. Now, I propose to drive them out with fire and sword, and doubt not to muster fifty good men-at-arms. Your train amounts to nearly the same number, and I shall be very happy to share the honour and pastime with so fair a knight, if you be disposed to join me."

The young man coloured slightly, but declined. "Important business," he said, "which he was afraid must have suffered by the mishap of his having lost his way the evening before, would utterly prevent him from enjoying the great honour of fighting under Sir Guy de Coucy;—but he should be most happy," he added, "to leave all the armed men of his train, if they could be of assistance in expelling the banditti from the territories of the Sire de Coucy. As for himself, he nowise feared to pursue his journey with merely his unarmed servants."

De Coucy, however, declined—somewhat dryly, too; his favourable opinion of the young stranger being greatly diminished by his neglecting, on any account, so fair an opportunity of exercising his prowess and

gaining renown. He conducted him courteously to his horse, notwithstanding, drank the stirrup-cup with him at parting, and, wishing him a fair and prosperous journey, returned into his castle.

Guillaume de la Roche Guyon rode on in silence at the head of his troop, till he had descended to the very bottom of the hill on which the château stood ; then, turning to one of his favourite retainers, as they entered the forest—“By the Lord ! Philippeau,” cried he, “saw ye ever such beggarly fare ? I slept not all night, half-choked as I was with hog’s flesh. And did you hear how he pressed me to my meat, as if he would fain have choked me outright ? The Lord deliver us from such poor châtelains, and send them back to fight in Palestine !”

“So say I, *beau sire*,” replied the retainer: “if they will take ship thither, we will pray for a fair wind.”

“And the cups of horn, Philippeau,” cried his lord, “and the wooden platters—did you mark them ? Oh, they were well worthy the viands they contained !”

“So say I, *beau sire*,” replied the living echo. “May they never contain any thing better !—for château and châtelain, dinner and dishes, were all of a piece.”

“And think of his dreaming that I would go against the honest Cotereaux with him !” cried the youth ; “risking my horse and my life, and losing my time ; all to rid his land of some scores of men as brave as himself, I dare say, and a great deal richer. ‘Twould have been a rare folly, indeed !”

“So say I, *beau sire*,” rejoined the inevitable Philippeau ; “that would have been turning his man before he had shown himself your master.—Ha, ha, ha !”

“Haw, haw, haw !” shouted a voice in answer, whose possessor remained for a moment invisible. The next instant, however, the legs of a man appeared dangling from one of the trees, a few yards before them ; then down dropped his body at the extent of his arms ; and, letting himself fall like a piece of lead, Gallon the Fool stood motionless in their way.

“ Ha !” cried Guillaume de la Roche, drawing forward what was called his *aumonière*,* a sort of pouch by his side, and taking out a couple of pieces of gold, “ Our good jongleur come for his guerdon !—Hold, fellow !” and he cast the money to Gallon the Fool, who caught each piece before it fell to the ground.

“ Haw, haw ! haw, haw !” cried Gallon. “ Gramercy, *beau sire !* gramercy ! Now will I tell thee a piece of news,” he continued in his abrupt and unconnected manner,—“ a piece of news that never should you have heard but for these two pieces of gold. Your lady love is at the castle of the Sire de Montmorency. Speed thither fast, and you shall win her yet.—Haw, haw ! Do you understand ? Win her old father first. Tell him of your broad lands, and your rich castles ; for old Sir Julian loves gold, as if it paved the way to heaven.—Haw, haw, haw ! When his love is won, never fear but that his daughter’s will come after ; and then, all because thou hast broad lands enough of thine own, thou shalt have all good Count Julian’s to back them.—Haw, haw ! haw, haw ! Thus it is we give to those that want not, and to those who want, we spit in their face—a goodly gift !—Haw, haw ! The world is mad, not I—’tis but the mishap of being single in one’s opinion !—Haw, haw, haw !” and darting away into the forest without staying farther question, he was soon lost to their sight.

No sooner, however, had Gallon the Fool assured himself that he was out of reach of pursuit, than suddenly stopping, he cast himself on the ground, and rolled over and over two or three times, while he made

* This part of the dress was a small pouch borne under the arm, and called *escarcelle*, or *pera*, when carried by pilgrims to the Holy Land. With the utmost reverence for the learning, talent, and patience of Ducange, it appears to me that he was mistaken in his interpretation of a passage of Cassian, relative to this part of the pilgrim’s dress. The sentence in Cassian is as follows : “ Ultimus est habitus eorum pellis caprina, qua melotes, vel pera appellatur, et baculus ;” which Ducange affirms to mean, that they wore a dress of goats’ skins, a wallet, and a stick. Embarrassed by taking *habit* in the limited sense of a garment, I should rather be inclined to think that the author merely meant that the last part of their (the monks’) dress was what is called a *pera*, or *melotes*, made of goat-skins, and a stick, and not three distinct articles, as Ducange imagines.—See *Ducange, Dissert. xv.*

the wood ring with his laughter. "Now have I murdered him!—now have I slaughtered him!—now have I given his throat to the butcher!" cried he, "as sure as if I held his head under Knock-me-down De Coucy's battle-axe—now will he go and buy the old fool Julian's consent and promise, for gold and rich furniture.—Haw, haw, haw! Then will Isadore refuse; and let the De Coucy know.—Haw, haw! Then will De Coucy come with lance and shield, and provoke my gallant to the fight, which for his knighthood he dare not refuse,—then will my great manslayer, my iron-fisted singer of songs, crush me this tiny, smooth-faced, quaint-apparelled imp of Provence, as I've seen a great eater craunch a lark.—Haw, haw! haw, haw! And all for having tweaked my nose, though none of them know any thing about it! He will insult my countenance no more, I trow, when the velvet black moles are digging through his cold heart with their white hands.—Ah, cursed countenance!" he cried, as if seized with some sudden emotion of rage, and striking his clenched fist hard upon his hideous face—"Ah, cursed countenance! thou hast brought down upon me mock and mimicry, hatred and contempt! Every thing is loved—every thing is sought—every thing is admired, but I; and I am fled from by all that see me, I am hated, and I hate myself—I am the Devil—surely I am the Devil!—and if so, I will enjoy my reign. Beware! beware! ye that mock me; for I will live by gnawing your hearts,—I will, I will!—Haw, haw!—that I will!" and suddenly bounding up, he caught one of the large boughs above his head, swung himself backward and forward for a minute in the air; and springing forward, with a loud screaming laugh, flew back to the castle like an arrow shot from a bow.

CHAPTER XIV.

We must now return for a time to the château of Compiègne, in one of the principal chambers of which, surrounded by a bevy of fair maids, sat Agnes de Meranie, bending her graceful head over an embroidery frame. As far as one might judge from the lively colours upon the ground of white satin, she was engaged in working a coat-of-arms; and she plied her small fingers busily, as if in haste. Her maids also were all fully engaged, each in some occupation which had in a degree a reference to that of the queen. One richly embroidered a sword-belt with threads of gold; another wove a golden fringe for the coat-of-arms; and a third was equally intent in tracing various symbols on a banner.

From what internal emotion it is hard to say—for song is not always a sign of joy,—the queen, as she sat at her work, sung, from time to time, some of the verses of one of the *cançons* of the day, in a sweet low voice, and in that sort of indifferent tone which seemed to show, that while her hands were busy with the embroidery, and her voice was as mechanically modulating the song, that nobler part of the mind which seems to dwell more in the heart than the brain, and whose thoughts are feelings, was busy with very different matter.

THE SEEKER FOR LOVE.

"On where is Love?" the pilgrim said,
"Is he prisoner, dead, or fled?
I've sought him far with spear and lance;
To meet him, seize and bind him.
I've sought him in each tower of France,
But never yet could find him—
There."—

"Should these flowers in the treasure be azure or gold, Blanch?" demanded the queen.

“Gold, madam!—Oh, certainly gold!” replied the lady, and the queen resumed her work and her song.

“Oh where is Love?” he said again,
“Let me not seek, and seek in vain!
In the proud cities have I been,
In cottages I’ve sought him,
‘Mid lords, ‘mid shepherds on the green,
But none of them have brought him—
There.”

“He is banished,” replied the knight,
“By the cold looks of our ladies bright!”—
“He is gone,” said the lady fair,
“To sport in Eden’s arbours,
As for men’s hearts, his old repair,
Treason alone now harbours—
There.”

“I have found him,” the pilgrim said;
“In my heart he has laid his head.
Though banish’d from knights and ladies rare,
And even shepherds discard him,
In my bosom shall be the god’s lair,
And with silken fetters I’ll guard him—
There.”

“Was it not on Thursday the king went?” demanded the queen.

“No, madam,” answered the lady, who had spoken before. “He went on Friday; and he cannot be back till the day after to-morrow, if he come then; for that false, uncourteous King of England is as full of wiles as of villanies, and will never give a clear reply; so that it always costs my lord the king longer to deal with him than any of his other vassals. Were I his brother, the Earl of Salisbury, who has been twice at Paris, and is as good a knight as ever wore a lady’s favour, I would sweep his head off with my long sword, and restore the crown to our little Arthur, who is the rightful king.”

“Where is the young truant?” demanded the queen. “I would fain ask him whether he would have these straps on the shoulder of plain silk or of gold.—Seek for him, good girl!”

But at that moment a part of the tapestry was suddenly pushed aside, and a slight, graceful boy, of about fifteen, sprang into the room. He was gayly dressed in a light tunic of sky-blue silk, and a jewelled bonnet

of the same colour, which showed well on his bright, fair skin, and the falling curls of his sunny hair.

"Not so far off as you thought, fair cousin," said he, casting himself on one knee beside the queen, and kissing one of the small delicate hands that lay on the embroidery-frame.

"Not eaves-dropping, I hope, Arthur," said Agnes de Meranie. "You, who are so soon to become a knight, are too noble for that, I am sure."

"Oh, surely!" said the boy, looking up in her face with an ingenuous blush. "I had but been to see my mother; and, as I came back, I stopped at the window above the stairs to watch an eagle that was towering over the forest so proudly, I could not help wishing I had been an eagle, to rise up like it into the skies, and see all the world stretched out beneath me. And then I heard you singing, and there was no harm in staying to listen to that, you know, *belle cousine*," he added, looking up with a smile.

"And how is the Lady Constance now?" demanded the queen.

"Oh! she is somewhat better," replied Arthur. "And she bade me thank you, fair queen, in her name, as well as my own, for undertaking the task which her illness prevented her from accomplishing."

"No thanks! no thanks! Prince Arthur," replied the queen. "Is it not the duty of every dame in France to aid in arming a knight when called upon? But tell me, Sir Runaway, for I have been waiting these ten minutes to know,—will you have these straps of cloth of gold or simple silk?"

This question gave rise to a very important discussion, which was just terminated by Arthur's predilection for gold, when a page, entering, announced to the queen that Guerin, the chancellor, desired a few minutes' audience.

The queen turned somewhat pale, for the first sting of adversity had gone deep in her heart, and she trembled lest it should be repeated. She commanded the attendant, however, to admit the minister, endeavouring,

as much as possible, to conceal the alarm and uneasiness which his visit caused her. The only symptom indeed of impatience which escaped her appeared in her turning somewhat quickly round, and pointing to a falcon that stood on its perch in one of the windows, and amused itself, on seeing some degree of bustle, by uttering one or two loud screams, thinking probably it was about to be carried to the field.

"Take that bird away, Arthur, good youth," said the queen; "it makes my head ache."

Arthur obeyed; and as he left the room, the Hospitaller entered, but not alone. He was followed by a tall, thin, wasted man, dressed in a brown frock, or *bure*, over which his white beard flowed down to his girdle. In fact, it was Bernard the Hermit, that, for the purposes we shall explain, had once more for a time quitted his solitude, and accompanied the minister of Philip Augustus to Compiègne.

The Hospitaller bowed his head as he advanced towards the queen; and the hermit gave her his blessing; but still, for a moment, the heart of poor Agnes de Meranie beat so fast, that she could only reply by pointing to two seats which her women left vacant by her side.

"Madame, we come to speak to you on matters of some importance," said Guerin, looking towards the queen's women, who, though withdrawn from her immediate proximity, still stood at a little distance. "Would it please you to let us have a few minutes of your presence alone? Myself and my brother Bernard are both unworthy members of the holy church, and therefore may claim a lady's ear for a short space, without falling into the danger of evil tongues."

"I fear no evil tongues, good brother," replied Agnes, summoning courage to meet whatever was to come; "and though I know of no subject concerning myself that I could wish concealed from the world, yet I will bid these poor girls go at your desire. Go, Blanche," she continued, turning to her principal attendant,—"go and wait in the anteroom till I call.

—Now, good brother, may I crave what can be your business with so unimportant a person as my poor self?"

"As far, madam," replied Guerin, after a moment's pause, "as the weal of this great realm of France is concerned, you are certainly any thing but an unimportant person; nor can a fair, a noble, and a virtuous lady ever be unimportant, be she queen or not. My brother Bernard, from whom that most excellent knight and king, your royal husband, has, as doubtless you know, lady, received many sage and prudent counsels, has consented to join himself to me for the bold purpose of laying before you a clear view of the state of this realm, risking thereby, we know, to hurt your feelings, and even to offend our lord the king, who has anxiously kept it concealed from you."

"Hold, fair brother!" said Agnes, mildly, but firmly; "and before you proceed, mark me well! Where the good of my noble Philip, or of his kingdom of France, may be obtained by the worst pain you can inflict on me, let no fear of hurting my feelings stop you in your course. Agnes gives you leave to hurt Agnes for her husband's good. But where, in the slightest degree, the confidence you would place in me is in opposition to the will of Philip, your king and mine, the queen commands you to be silent. Stay, good brother, hear me out: I know that you would say, it is for the king's ultimate good, though he may disapprove of it at present; but to me, good bishop, and you, father hermit,—to me, my husband's wisdom is supreme, as his will to me is law; and though I will listen to your counsel and advice with all humility, yet you must tell me nothing that my lord would not have me hear, for on his judgment alone will I depend."

Guerin looked to the hermit, who instantly replied, "Daughter, you have spoken well, wisely, and nobly, and I—even I, marvel not,—though my heart is like a branch long broken from its stem, withered, and verdureless,—that Philip of France clings so fondly to one, where beauty, and wisdom, and love are so strangely

united ; strangely, indeed, for this world ! where if any two of such qualities meet, 'tis but as that eastern plant which blossoms but once an age. Let us only to council, then, my child, and see what best may be done to save the realm from all the horrors that menace it."

The hermit spoke in a tone of such unwonted mildness, that Guerin, apparently doubting his firmness in executing the purpose that had brought them thither, took up the discourse.

"Lady," said he, "after the ungrateful occurrence which terminated the tournament of the Champeaux,—forgive me that I recall what must pain you,—you can hardly doubt that our holy father the pope, in his saintly wisdom, considers that the decree of the prelates of France, annulling the marriage of the king with Ingerburge of Denmark, was illegal, and consequently invalid. Need I,—need I, lady, urge upon you the consequences if our royal lord persists in neglecting or resisting the repeated commands of the supreme pontiff?"

Agnes turned deadly pale, and pointed to a crystal cup filled with water, which stood near. The minister gave it to her ; and, having drunk a few drops, she covered her eyes with her hand for a moment, then raised them, and replied, with less apparent emotion than might have been expected, " You do not clothe the truth, sir, in that soft guise which makes it less terrible of aspect to a weak woman's eyes, though not less certain ; but you have been a soldier, sir, and also a recluse, mingling not with such feeble things as we are ; and therefore I must forgive you the hard verities you speak. What is it you wish me to do ?—for I gather from your manner that there is some task you would fain impose upon me."

Pained by the effect his words had had upon the queen, and feeling uncertain of how far he might venture without driving her to actual despair, embarrassed also by his small habits of intercourse with women, Guerin turned once more to the hermit.

" The task, my child." said the old man, in compli-

ance with the minister's look, "is, indeed, a painful one,—bitterly painful ; but, if it approaches to the agony of martyrdom, it is by its self-devotion equally sublime and glorious. Think, daughter, what a name would that woman gain in history, who, to save her husband's realm from civil war and interdict, and himself from excommunication and anathema, should voluntarily take upon herself the hard duty of opposing not only his inclinations but also her own ; should tear herself from all that was dear to her, and thereby restore him to his glory and himself,—his realm to peace, and tranquillity to the bosom of the church,—think what a name she would gain in history, and what such a sacrifice might merit from Heaven!"

"Stay! stay! father," said Agnes, raising her hand. "Stay,—let me think ;" and casting down her beautiful eyes, she remained for a few moments in profound thought. After a short pause, Guerin, lest the impression should subside, attempted to fortify the hermit's arguments with his own ; but the queen waved her hand for silence, thought again, and then raising her eyes, she replied :—

"I understand you, father ; and, from my heart, I believe you seek the good of my husband the king. But this thing must not be,—it cannot be!"

"It is painful, lady," said Guerin ; "but to a mind like yours,—to a heart that loves your husband better than yourself—"

"Hold, my good brother!" said Agnes. "I, a weak, unwise woman, am ill fitted to contend with two wise and learned men like you ; and therefore I will at once tell you why I reject a task that no consideration of my own feelings would have caused me to refuse ;—no, not had it slain me !" she added, raising her eyes to Heaven, as if appealing there for the truth of her assertion. "In the first place, I am the wife of Philip King of France ; and my lips shall never do my fame the dishonour to admit that for an instant I have been aught else, since his hand clasped mine before the altar of St. Denis, in presence of all the prelates and

bishops of his realm. I should dishonour myself—I should dishonour my child did I think otherwise. As his wife, I am in honour bound never to quit him with my good-will; and to submit myself in all things to his judgment and his wisdom. His wisdom, then, must be the judge; I will in no one thing oppose it. If but in the slightest degree I see he begins to think the sacrifice of our domestic happiness necessary to the public weal, I will yield without resistance, and bear my sorrows alone to the grave that will soon overtake me; but never till that grave has closed upon me will I admit that there is another Queen of France; never will I acknowledge that I am not the lawful wife of Philip Augustus; nor ever will I oppose myself to my husband's will, or arrogate to myself the right of judging where he himself has decided. No! Philip has formed his own determination from his own strong mind; and far be it from me, his wife, by a word to shake his resolution, or by a thought to impeach his judgment!"

The queen spoke calmly but decidedly; and though no tone in her voice betrayed any degree of vehemence, yet the bright light of her eye and the alternate flushing and paleness of her cheek seemed to evince a far more powerful struggle of feeling within than she suffered to appear in her language.

"But hear me, lady,—hear me once more, for all our sakes!" exclaimed Guerin.

"Sir, I can listen no longer!" said Agnes, rising from her seat with a degree of energy and dignity that her slight form and gentle disposition seemed incapable of displaying. "My resolution is taken—my course is fixed, my path is made; and nothing on earth shall turn me therefrom. The icy mountains of my native land," she continued, pointing with her hand in the direction, as she fancied, of the Tyrol, "whose heads have stood for immemorial ages, beaten in vain by storm and tempest, are not more immovable than I am.—But I am not well," she added, turning somewhat pale;—"I pray you, good sirs, leave me!"

Guerin bowed his head, yet lingered, saying, "And yet I would fain—"

"I am not well, sir," said the queen, turning paler and paler. "Send me my women, I beseech you!"

Guerin made a step towards the door, but suddenly turned, just in time to catch the beautiful princess in his arms, as, overcome by excitement and distress of mind, she fell back in one of those death-like fainting fits which had seized her first at the Champeaux.

Her women were immediately called to her assistance; and the minister and the hermit retired, disappointed, indeed, in the purpose they had proposed to effect, but hardly less admiring the mingled dignity, gentleness, and firmness with which the queen had conducted herself in one of the most painful situations wherein ever a good and virtuous woman was placed on earth.

"And now, what more can be done?" said Guerin, pausing on the last step of the staircase, and speaking in a tone that implied abandonment of farther effort rather than expectation of counsel. "What can be done?"

"Nothing, my son," replied the hermit,—"nothing, without thou wouldest again visit yon fair unhappy girl, to torture her soul without shaking her purpose. For me I have no call to wring my fellow-creatures' hearts; and therefore I meddle herein no more. Fare thee well! I go to De Coucy Magny, as they call it, to see a wild youth whose life I saved, I fear me, to little purpose."

"But not on foot!" said Guerin; "'tis far, good brother. Take a horse, a mule, from my stable, I pray thee!"

"And why not on foot?" asked the old man. "Our Lord and Saviour walked on foot, I trow; and he might have well been prouder than thou or I."

CHAPTER XV.

THE woods of De Coucy Magny stretched far over hill, and dale, and plain, where now not the root of one ancient tree is to be seen ; and many a vineyard, and a cornfield, and a meadow are to-day spread fair out in the open sunshine, which were then covered with deep and tangled underwood, or shaded by the broad arms of vast primeval oaks.

Two straight roads passed through the forest, and a multitude of smaller paths, which, winding about in every different direction, crossing and recrossing each other, now avoiding the edge of a pond and making a large circuit, now taking advantage of a savannah, to proceed straight forward, and now turning sharp round the vast boll of some antique tree, formed altogether an absolute labyrinth, through which it needed a very certain clew, or very long experience, to proceed in safety.

These paths also, however multiplied and intersected, left between them many a wide unbroken space of forest ground, where apparently the foot of man had never trod, nor axe of woodman ever rung, the only tracks through which seemed to be some slight breaks in the underwood, where the rushing sides of a boar or deer had dashed the foliage aside. Many of these spaces were of the extent of several thousand acres ; and if the very intricacy of the general forest paths themselves would not have afforded shelter and concealment to men who, like the Cotereaux and Routiers, as much needed a well-hidden lair as ever did the wildest savage of the wood, such asylum was easily to be found in the dark recesses of these inviolate wilds.

Here, on a bright morning of July, when the gray of the sky was just beginning to warm with the rising

day, a single man, armed with sword, corslet, and steel bonnet, all shining with the last polishing touch which they had received at the shop of the armourer, took his way alone down one of the narrowest paths of the forest. In his hand he held an *arbalète*,* or crossbow, then a very late invention; and, by the careful manner in which he examined every bush as he passed, he seemed some huntsman tracing, step by step, the path of a deer.

“Cursed be the fools!” muttered he to himself; “they have not taken care to mark the *brisé* well; and, in this strange forest, how am I to track them? Ah, here is another!” and, passing on from tree to tree, he at length paused where one of the smaller branches, broken across, hung with its leaves just beginning to wither from the interruption of the sap. Here turning from the direct path, he pushed his way through the foliage, stooping his head to prevent the branches striking him in the face, but still taking pains to remark at every step each tree or bush that he passed; and wherever he perceived a broken branch, keeping it to his right-hand as he proceeded. His eyes nevertheless were now and then turned to the left, as well as the right; and at length, after he had advanced about four hundred yards in this cautious manner, he found the boughs broken all around, so that the *brisé*, as he called it, terminated there; and all guide by which to direct his course seemed at an end.

At this place he paused; and, after examining more scrupulously every object in the neighbourhood, he uttered a long whistle, which, after a moment or two, met with a reply, but from such a distance that it was scarcely audible. The crossbowman whistled again; and the former sound was repeated, but evidently nearer. Then came a slight rustling in the bushes,

* Guillaume le Breton says unqualifiedly, that Richard Cœur de Lion invented the *arbalete*, or crossbow. Brompton, on the other hand, only declares that he revived the use of it, “*hoc genus sagittandi in usum revocavit.*” Without precisely remembering where, I think I have met with the description of such a weapon prior to the time here referred to.

as if some large body stirred the foliage, and then for a moment all was still.

"Ha, Jodelle!" cried a voice at last, from the other side of the bushes. "Is it you?" and pushing through the leaves, which had concealed him while he had paused to examine the stranger, a genuine Routier, if one might judge by his very rude and rusty arms, entered the little open space in which the other had been waiting. He had an unbent bow in his hand, and a store of arrows in his belt, which was garnished still further with a strong short sword, and of knives and daggers not a few, from the *misericorde* of a hand's breadth long, to the thigh knife of a peasant of those days, whose blade of nearly two feet in length rendered it a serviceable and tremendous weapon.

He had on his back, by way of clothing, a light iron haubert, which certainly shone not brightly; nor possibly was it desirable for him that it should. Though of somewhat more solid materials than a linen gown, it had more than one rent in it, where the rings had either been broken by a blow, or worn through by age; but, in these places, the deficient links had been supplied by cord, which at all events kept the yawning mouths of the gaps together. On his head was placed an iron hat, as it was called, much in the shape of the famous helmet of Mambrino, as described by Cervantes; and round about it were twined several branches of oak, which rendered his head, when seen through the boughs, scarce distinguishable from the leaves themselves; while his rugged and dingy haubert might well pass for a part of the trunk of one of the trees.

"Well met! well met, Jodelle!" cried he, as the other approached. "Come to the halting-place. We have waited for you long, and had scanty fare. But say, what have you done? Have you slit the devil's weasand, or got the knight's purse? Do you bring us good news or bad? Do you come gay or sorry? Tell me! tell me, Jodelle! Thou art our leader, but must not lead us to hell with thy new-fashioned ways."

"Get thee on to the halt," replied Jodelle. "I will tell all there."

The two Cotereaux—for such they were—now made their way through the trees and shrubs, to a spot where the axe had been busily plied to clear away about half an acre of ground, round which were placed a range of huts, formed of branches, leaves, and mud, capable of containing perhaps two or three hundred men.

In the open space in the centre, several personages of the same respectable class as the two we have already introduced to the reader were engaged in various athletic sports—pitching an immense stone, shooting at a butt, or striking downright blows at a log of wood, to see who could hew into its substance most profoundly.

Others again were scattered about, fashioning bows out of strong beechen poles, pointing arrows and spears, or sharpening their knives and swords; while one or two lay listlessly looking on, seemingly little inclined to employ very actively either their mental or corporeal faculties.

The arrival of Jodelle, as he was called, put a stop to the sports, and caused a momentary bustle among the whole party; the principal part of whom seemed to recognise in him one of the most distinguished members of their fraternity, although some of those present appeared to gaze on him as a stranger.

"Welcome, welcome, Sire Jodelle!" cried one who had been fashioning a bow. "By my faith! we have much needed thy presence. We are here at poor quarters. Not half so good as we had in the mountains of Auvergne, till that bad day's work we made of it between the Allier and the Puy; and a hundred thousand times worse than when we served the merry King of England, under that bold knight Mercader. Oh, the quarrel of that crossbow at Chaluz was the worst shaft ever was shot for us. Those days will never come again."

"They may, they may!" replied Jodelle, "and before

we dream of—for good hard wars are spoken of; and then the detested Cotereaux grow, with these good kings, into their faithful troops of Brabançois—their excellent free companions! But we shall see. In the mean time, tell me, where is Jean le Borgne?"

"He is gone with a party to look for some rich Jews going to Rouen," replied the person who had spoken before. "But we have plenty of men here for any bold stroke, if there be one in the market; and besides—"

"Did you meet with Captain Vanswelder?" interrupted Jodelle. "The fools at the castle believe he has two thousand bows with him. Where does he lie? How many has he?"

"He never had above four hundred," replied another of the Cotereaux, who by this time had gathered thickly round Jodelle; "and when your men came—if you are the captain, Jodelle—he took such of us as would go with him down to Normandy, to offer himself to the bad King John for half the sum of crowns we had before. Now, fifty of us who had served King Richard, and value our honour, agreed not to undersell ourselves after such a fashion as that; so we joined ourselves to your men, to take the chance of the road."

"You did wisely and honourably," replied Jodelle; "but you would have been very likely to get hanged or roasted for your pains, if I had not, by chance, stuck myself to the skirts of that Guy de Coucy, who is now at his château hard by, menacing fire and sword to every man of us that he finds in his wood. By St. Macrobius! I believe the mad-headed boy would have attacked Vanswelder and his whole troop, with the few swords he can muster, which do not amount to fifty. A brave youth he is, as ever lived:—pity 'tis he must die! And yet when he dashed out my brother's brains with his battle-axe, I vowed to God and St. Nicolas! that I would die or slay him, as well as that treacherous slave who betrayed us into attacking a band of men-at-arms instead of a company of pilgrims. It is a firm vow, and must be kept."

"And yet, good master Jodelle, thou hast been some-

what slow in putting it in execution," said one of the Cotereaux. "Here thou and Gerard Pons have been near a month with him—and yet, from all that I can divine, thou hast neither laid thy finger on master or man!"

"Ha! Sir Fool, wouldest thou have done it better?" demanded Jodelle, turning on the speaker fiercely. "If I slew the fool juggler first, which were easy to do, never should I get a stroke at his lord; and let me tell thee, 'tis no such easy matter to reach the master, who has never doffed his steel haubert since I have seen him—except when he sleeps, and then a varlet and a page lie across his door—a privilege which he gave them in the Holy Land, where they saved his life from a raw Saracen; and now, the fools hold it as such an honour, they would not yield it for a golden ring. Besides," he added, grinning with a mixture of shrewd malevolence and self-conceit in his countenance, "I have a plot in my head. You know I bear a brain."

"Yes, yes!" replied several; "we know thou art rare at a plot. What goes forward now? I vow a wax-candle to the Virgin Mary if it be a good plot, and succeeds," added one of them: but this liberality towards the Virgin, unhappily for the priests, met with no imitators.

"My plot," replied Jodelle, "is as good a plot as ever was laid—ay, or hatched either—and will succeed too. Wars are coming on thick. We have no commander since our quarrel with Mercader. This De Coucy has no men. To the wars he must and will; and surely would rather be followed by a stout bald of free companions, than have his banner fluttering at the head of half a dozen varlets, like a red rag on a furze bush. I will find means to put it in his head, and means to bring about that you shall be the men. Then shall he lead us to spoil and plunder enough, and leave it all to us when he has got it—for his hand is as free as his heart is bold. My vow will stand over till the war is done, and then the means of executing it will be in my own hands. What say you?"

"A good plot!—an excellent good plot!" cried several of the Cotereaux; but nevertheless, though plunged deep in blood and crime, there were many of the band who knit their brow and turned down the corner of the mouth at the profound piece of villany with which master Jodelle finished his proposal. This did not prevent them from consenting, however; and Jodelle proceeded to make various arrangements for disposing comfortably of the band during the space of time which was necessarily to elapse before his plan could be put in execution.

The first thing to be done was to evacuate the woods of De Coucy Magny, that no unpleasant collision might take place between the Cotereaux and De Coucy; and the next consideration was, where the band was to lie till something more was decided. This difficulty was soon put aside by one of the troop which had been originally in possession of the forest, proposing as a refuge some woods in the neighbourhood, which they had haunted previous to betaking themselves to their present refuge. They then agreed to divide into two separate bands, and to confine their system of plundering as much as possible to the carrying off of horses; so that no difficulty might be found in mounting the troop, in case of the young knight accepting of their services.

"And now," cried Jodelle, "how many are you, when all are here?"

"One hundred and thirty-three," was the reply.

"Try to make up three fifties," cried Jodelle, "and, in the first place, decamp with all speed; for, this very day, De Coucy, with all the horsemen he can muster, will be pricking through every brake in the forest. Carry off all your goods—unroof the huts—and if there be a clerk among you, let him write me a scroll, and leave it on the place, to say you quit it all for the great name of De Coucy. So shall his vanity be tickled."

"Oh! there's Jeremy the Monk can both read and write, you know," cried several; "and as for parchment, he shall write upon the linen that was in the pedler's pack."

"And now," cried Jodelle, "to the work! But first show me where haunt the deer, for I must take back a buck to the castle to excuse my absence."

With very little trouble a fine herd was found, just cropping the morning grass; and Jodelle instantly brought down a choice buck with a quarrel from his crossbow. He then bade adieu to his companions, and casting the carcass over his shoulders, he took his way back to the castle.

It may be almost needless here to say, that this very respectable personage, calling himself Jodelle, was one of the two men who had been received into De Coucy's service in Auvergne, for the purpose of leading to Paris two beautiful Arabian horses he had brought from Palestine. His object in joining the young knight at all, and for fixing himself in his train more particularly afterward, having been already explained by himself, we shall not notice; but shall only remark, that personal revenge being in those days inculcated even as a virtue, it was a virtue not at all likely to be so confined to the better classes, as not to ornament in a high degree persons of Jodelle's station and profession.

The gates of the castle were open, and De Coucy himself standing on the drawbridge, as the Coterel returned.

"Ha! varlet," said he. "Where hast thou been without the gates so early? I must have none here that stray forth when they may be needed!"

"I had naught to do, beau sire," replied Jodelle, "and went but to strike a buck in the wood, that your board might show some venison:—I have not been long, though it led me farther than I thought."

"Ha! canst thou wing a shaft, or a quarrel well?" demanded De Coucy. "Thou hast brought down indeed a noble buck, and hit him fair in the throat. What distance was your shot?"

"A hundred and twenty yards," answered the Coterel; "and if I hit not a Normandy pippin at the same, may my bowstring be cut by your mad fool, sir knight!"

“By the blessed saints!” cried De Coucy, “thou shalt try this very day at a better mark; for thou shalt have a *Coterel’s* head within fifty steps, before yon same sun that has just risen goes down over the wood!”

“The poor Cotereaux!” cried Jodelle, affecting a look of compassion. “They are hunted from place to place like wild beasts; and yet there is many a good soldier among them, after all.”

“Out, fellow!” cried the knight. “Speakest thou for plunderers and common thieves?”

“Nay, beau sire! I speak not for them,” replied Jodelle. “Yet what can the poor devils do? Here, in time of war, they spend their blood and their labour in the cause of one or other of the parties; and then, the moment they are of no farther use, they are cast off like a mail-shirt after a battle. They have no means of living but by their swords; and when no one will employ them, what can they do?—What could I have done myself, beau sire, if your noble valour had not induced you to take me into your train? All the money I had got in the wars was spent; and I must have turned Routier, or starved.”

“But would you say, fellow, that you have been a *Coterel*?” demanded De Coucy, eying him from head to foot, as a man might be supposed to do on finding himself unexpectedly in company with a wolf, and discovering that it was a much more civilized sort of an animal than he expected.

“I will not deny, beau sire,” replied Jodelle, “that I once commanded two hundred as good free lances as ever served King Richard.”

“Where are they now?” demanded De Coucy, with some degree of growing interest in the man to whom he spoke. “Are they dispersed? What has become of them?”

“I do not well know, beau sire,” replied the *Coterel*. “When Peter Gourdin’s arblast set Richard the lion-hearted on the same long dark journey that he had sent so many others himself, I quarrelled with Count

Mercader, under whom I served. Richard with his dying breath, as you have doubtless heard, fair sir, ordered the man Gourdun, who had killed him, to be spared and set free ; and Mercader promised to obey : but no sooner was King Richard as cold as King Pepin, than Mercader had Gourdun tied hand and foot to the harrow of the drawbridge of Chaluz, and saw him skinned alive with his own eyes."

"Cruel villain!" cried De Coucy.

"Ay! fair knight," rejoined the Coterel. "I ventured to say that he was disobedient as a soldier, as well as cruel as a knight ; and that he ought to have obeyed the king's commands, just as much after he was dead as if he had lived to see them obeyed. What will you have? There were plenty to tell Mercader what I said :—there were high words followed ; and I left the camp as soon as peace was trumpeted. I had saved some money, and hoped to buy a haubert feoff under some noble lord ; but, as evil fortune would have it, I met with a *menestrandie* consisting of the chief *menestrel*, and four or five jongleurs and gleemaidens ; and never did they leave me till all I had was nearly gone : what lasted kept me a year at Besançon ; after which I was glad enough to engage myself for hire, to ride your horses from Vic le Comte to Paris."

"But your troop!" said De Coucy. "Have you never heard any news of all your men?"

"I have heard, through one of the minstrels," said the Coterel, "that soon after I was gone, they repented and would not take service with King John, as they had at first proposed ; but came to offer themselves to the noble King Philip of France, who, however, being at peace, would not entertain them ; and that they are now roaming about, seeking some noble baron who will give them protection, and lead them where they may gain both money and a good name."

"By the rood! they want the last, perhaps, more than the first," replied De Coucy, turning to enter the château.

The Coterel's brow darkened, and he set his teeth hard, feeling the head of his dagger as he followed the knight, as if his hand itched to draw it and strike De Coucy from behind; which indeed he might easily have done, and with fatal effect, at the spot where the haubert ending left his throat and collar bare.

It is not improbable that Jodelle would have yielded without hesitation to the temptation of opportunity, especially as his escape over the drawbridge into the wood might have been effected in an instant; but he saw clearly that his words had made an impression upon the knight. For the moment indeed they seemed to produce no determinate result, yet it was evident that whenever he found a fitting opportunity, it would be easy to reawaken the ideas to which he had already given birth, and by suggesting a very slight link of connexion, cause De Coucy to make the application to himself.

One reason, perhaps, why very prudent men are often not so successful as bold ones, may be that, even in the moment of consideration, opportunity is lost. While the Coterel still held his hand upon his dagger, De Coucy's squire, Hugo de Barre, approached to tell the young châtelain, that his seven vassals—the poor remains of hundreds—were very willing to ride against the Cotereaux, though such was no part of their actual tenure; and that, as soon as they could don their armour and saddle their horses, they would be up at the castle. They promised also to bring with them all the armed men they could get to aid them, in the towns and villages in the neighbourhood, not one of which had escaped without paying some tribute to the dangerous tenants of the young knight's woods.

In little less than an hour, De Coucy found himself at the head of near one hundred men; and, confident in his own powers both of mind and body, he waited not for many others that were still hastening to join him; but, giving his banner to the wind, set forth to attack the banditti, in whatever numbers he might find them.

It were uninteresting to detail all the measures that De Coucy took to ensure that no part of the forests should remain unsearched; especially as we already know that his perquisitions were destined to be fruitless. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the means that the Coterel employed to draw the young knight and his followers, without seeming to do so, towards the spot which his companions had so lately evacuated.

De Coucy by nature was not suspicious; but yet his eye very naturally strayed, from time to time, to the face of Jodelle, whose fellow-feeling for the Cotereaux had been so openly expressed in the morning; and, as they approached the former halting-place of the Cotereaux, he remarked somewhat of a smile upon his lip.

“Ha!” said he, in an under-voice, at the same time turning his horse and riding up to him. “What means that smile, Sir Brabançois?”

Jodelle’s reply was ready. “It means, Sir Knight, that I *can* help you, and I *will*; for even were these my best friends, the laws by which we are ruled bind me to render you all service against them, on having engaged with you.—Do you see that broken bough? Be you sure that means something. The men you seek for are not far off.”

“So, my good friend,” said De Coucy, “methinks you must have exercised the trade of Brabançois in the green wood, as well as in the tented field, to know so well all the secret signs of these gentry’s hiding-places.”

“I have laid many an ambush in the green wood,” replied Jodelle, undauntedly; “and the signs that have served me for that may well lead me to trace others.”

“Here are footmarks on the moss, both of horse and foot,” cried Hugo de Barre, “and lately trodden too, for scarce a fold of the moss has risen since.”

“Coming or going?” cried De Coucy, spurring up to the spot.

“Both, my lord,” replied the squire. “Here are hoof-marks all ways.”

Without wasting time in endeavouring to ascertain

which traces were the last imprinted, De Coucy took such precautions as the scantiness of his followers permitted for ensuring that the Cotereaux did not make their escape by some other point; and then boldly plunged in on horseback, following through the bushes, as well as he could, the marks that the band had left behind them when they decamped. He was not long in making his way to the open space which we have before described, surrounded with huts. The state of the whole scene at once showed that it had been but lately abandoned; though the unroofing of the hovels evinced that its former tenants entertained no thought of making it any more their dwelling-place.

In the centre of the opening, however, stood the staff of a lance, on the end of which was fixed a scroll of parchment written in very fair characters to the following effect:—

“Sire de Coucy!—hearing of your return to your lands, we leave them willingly—not because we fear you, or any man, but because we respect your knightly prowess, and would not willingly stand in deadly fight against one of the best knights in France.”

“By St. Jerome! the knaves are not without their courtesy!” exclaimed De Coucy. “Well, now they are off my land, God speed them!”

“Where the devil did they get the parchment?” muttered Jodelle to himself:—and thus ended the expedition with two exclamations that did not slightly mark the age.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE are no truer chameleons than words, changing hue and aspect as the circumstances change around them, and leaving scarce a shade of their original meaning. *Piety* has at present many acceptations, according

to the various lips that pronounce it, and the ears that hear; but in the time of the Commonwealth, it meant the grossest fanaticism; and in the time of Philip Augustus, the grossest superstition.

An age where knowledge and civilization have made some progress, yet not attained the cold fondness for abstract facts, may be called the period of imagination in a nation; and then it will generally be found, that in matters of religion a brooding, a melancholy, and a fanatical spirit reigns. Sectarian enthusiasm is then sufficient to keep itself alive in each man's breast, without imagination requiring any aid from external stimulants: the language of the pulpit is flowery and extravagant, the manners are rigid and austere, and the rites simple and unadorned.

In more remote periods, however, where brutal ignorance is the general character of society, the only means of communicating with the dull imagination of the people is by their outward senses. Pomp, pageant and display, music and ceremony, accompany each rite of the church, to give it dignity in the eyes of the multitude, who, if they do not understand the spirit, at least worship the form. Such was the case in the days of Philip Augustus. The people, with very few exceptions,—barons, knights, serfs, and ecclesiastics,—beheld, felt, and understood little else in religion than the ceremonies of the church of Rome. Each festival of the church was for them a day of rejoicing; each saint was an object of the most profound devotion; and each genuflexion of the priest (though the priest himself was often bitterly satirized in the sirventes of the trouvères and troubadours) was a sacred rite, that the populace would not have seen abrogated for the world. The ceremonies of the church were the link—the only remaining link—between the noble and the serf; and, common to all,—the high, the low, the rich, the poor,—were revered and loved by all classes of the community.

Such was the general state of France in regard to religious feelings when the kingdom was menaced with interdict by Pope Innocent the Third. The very

rumour cast a gloom over the whole nation; but when the legate, proceeding according to the rigid injunctions of the pope, called the bishops, archbishops, and abbots of France to a council at Dijon, for the purpose of putting the threat in execution, the murmurs and lamentations burst forth all over France.

Philip Augustus, however, remained inflexible in his resolution of resistance; and, though he sent two messengers to protest against the proceedings of the council, he calmly suffered its deliberations to proceed, without a change of purpose. The pope was equally unmoved; and the Cardinal of St. Mary's proceeded to the painful task which had been imposed upon him; declaring to the assembled bishops the will of the sovereign pontiff, and calling upon them to name the day themselves on which the interdict should be pronounced. The bishops and abbots found all opposition in vain, and the day was consequently named.

It was about this period that Count Thibalt d'Auvergne, having laid the ashes of his father in the earth, prepared to retrace his steps to Paris. His burden upon earth was a heavy one; yet, like the overloaded camel in the desert, he resolutely bore it on without murmur or complaint, waiting till he should drop down underneath it, and death should give him relief. A fresh furrow might be traced on his brow, a deeper shade of stern melancholy in his eye; but that was all by which one might guess how painfully he felt the loss of what he looked on as his last tie to earth. His voice was calm and firm, his manner clear and collected; nothing escaped his remembrance; nothing indicated that his thoughts were not wholly in the world wherein he stood, except the fixed contraction of his brow, and the sun-shineless coldness of his lip.

When, as we have before said, he had given his power, as suzerain of Auvergne, into the hands of his uncle, he himself mounted his horse, and, followed by a numerous retinue, set out from Vic le Comte.

He turned not, however, his steps towards Paris in the first instance, but proceeded direct to Dijon. Here he found no small difficulty in obtaining a lodging for

himself and train : the monasteries, on whose hospitality he had reckoned, being completely occupied by the great affluence of prelates, which the council had brought thither ; and the houses of public entertainment being, in that day, unmeet dwellings for persons of his rank. Nevertheless, dispersing his followers through the town, with commands to keep his name secret, the Count d'Auvergne took up his abode at the house of a *tavernier*, or vintner, and proceeded to make the inquiries which had caused him so far to deviate from his direct road.

These referred entirely to—and he had long before determined to make them—the property of the Count de Tankerville ; on which, however, he soon found that King Philip had laid his hands ; and therefore, the story of Gallon the Fool being confirmed in this point, he gave up all further questions upon the subject, as not likely to produce any benefit to his friend De Coucy.

Occupied as he had been in Auvergne, the progress of the council of bishops had but reached his ears vaguely ; and he determined that the very next day he would satisfy himself in regard to its deliberations, which, though indeed they could take no atom from the load on his heart, nor restore one drop of happiness to his cup, yet interested him, perhaps, as much as any human being in France.

The day had worn away in his other inquiries, the evening had passed in bitter thoughts ; and midnight had come without bringing even the hope of sleep to his eyelids ; when suddenly he was startled by hearing the bells of all the churches in Dijon toll, as for the dead. Immediately rising, he threw his cloak about him, and, drawing the hood over his head and face, proceeded into the street, to ascertain whether the fears which those sounds had excited in his bosom were well founded.

In the street he found a multitude of persons flocking towards the cathedral ; and, hurrying on with the rest, he entered at one of the side doors, and crossed to the centre of the nave.

The sight that presented itself was certainly awful. No tapers were lighted at the high altar ; not a shrine gave forth a single ray ; but on the steps before the table stood the cardinal legate, dressed in the deep purple stole worn on the days of solemn fast in the church of Rome. On each hand, the steps, and part of the choir were crowded with bishops and mitred abbots, each in the solemn habiliments appropriated by his order to the funeral fasts ; and each holding in his hand a black and smoky torch of pitch, which spread through the whole church their ungrateful odour and their red and baleful light. The space behind the altar was crowded with ecclesiastics and monks, on the upper part of whose pale and meager faces the dim and ill-favouring torchlight cast an almost un-earthly gleam ; while streaming down the centre of the church, over the kneeling congregation, on whose dark vestments it seemed to have no effect, the red glare spread through the nave and aisles, catching faintly on the tall pillars and gothic tracery of the cathedral, and losing itself, at last, in the deep gloom all around.

The choir of the cathedral were in the act of singing the *Miséréré* as the Count d'Auvergne entered ; and the deep and solemn notes of the chant, echoed by the vaulted roofs, and long aisles and galleries, while it harmonized well with the gloominess of the scene, offered frightful discord when the deep toll of the death-bell broke across, with sounds entirely dissonant. No longer doubting that his apprehensions were indeed true, and that the legate was about to pronounce the realm in interdict, Thibalt d'Auvergne advanced as far as he could towards the choir, and, placing himself by one of the pillars, prepared, with strange and mingled emotions, to hear the stern thunder of the church launched at two beings whose love had made his misery, and whose happiness was built upon his disappointment.

It were too cruel an inquest of human nature to ask if, at the thought of Agnes de Meranie being torn from the arms of her royal lover, a partial gleam of

undefined satisfaction did not thrill through the heart of the Count d'Auvergne ; but this at least is certain, that could he, by laying down his life, have swept away the obstacles between them, and removed the agonizing difficulties of Agnes's situation, Thibalt d'Auvergne would not have hesitated—no, not for a moment !

At the end of the *Miséréré*, the legate advanced, and in a voice that trembled even at the sentence it pronounced, placed the whole realm of France in interdict,—bidding the doors of the churches to be closed ; the images of the saints, and the cross itself, to be veiled ; the worship of the Almighty to be suspended ; marriage to the young, the Eucharist to the old and dying, and sepulture to the dead to be refused ; all the rites, the ceremonies, and the consolations of religion to be denied to every one ; and France to be as a dead land, till such time as Philip the king should separate himself from Agnes, his concubine, and take again to his bosom Ingerburge, his lawful wife.

At that hard word, concubine, applied to Agnes de Meranie, the Count d'Auvergne's hand naturally grasped his dagger ; but the legate was secure in his sacred character, and he proceeded to anathematize and excommunicate Philip, according to the terrible form of the church of Rome, calling down upon his head the curses of all the powers of heaven !

“ May he be cursed in the city, and in the field, and in the highway ! in living, and in dying ! ” said the legate ; “ cursed be his children, and his flocks, and his *domaines* ! Let no man call him brother, or give him the kiss of peace ! Let no priest pray for him, or admit him to God's altar ! Let all men flee from him living, and let consolation and hope abandon his death-bed ! Let his corpse remain unburied, and his bones whiten in the wind ! Cursed be he on earth, and under the earth ! in this life, and to all eternity ! ”

Such was in some degree, though far short of the tremendous original, the anathema which the legate pronounced against Philip Augustus—to our ideas unchristian, and almost blasphemous ; but then, the people

heard it with reverence and trembling ; and even when he summed up the whole, by announcing it in the name of the Holy Trinity—of the Father—of all mercy !—of the Son—the Saviour of the world !—and of the Holy Ghost—the Lord and Giver of life ! the people, instead of starting from the impious mingling of Heaven's holiest attributes with the violent passions of man, joined the clergy in a loud and solemn *Amen* !

At the same moment all the sounds ceased ; the torches were extinguished ; and in obscurity and confusion, the dismayed multitude made their way out of the cathedral.

CHAPTER XVII.

GLOOM and consternation spread over the face of France ; the link seemed cut between it and the other nations of the earth. Each man appeared to stand alone : each one brooded over his new situation with a gloomy despondency. No one doubted that the curse of God was upon the land ; and the daily, nay, hourly deprivation of every religious ceremony was constantly recalling it to the imaginations of all.

The doors of the churches were shut and barred ; the statues of the saints were covered with black ; the crosses on the highroads were veiled. The bells which had marked the various hours of the day, calling all classes to pray to one beneficent God, were no longer heard swinging slowly over field and plain. The serf returned from the glebe, and the lord from the wood, in gloomy silence, missing all those appointed sounds that formed the pleasant interruption to their dull toil, or duller amusements.

All old accustomed habits,—those grafts in our nature which cannot be torn out without agony,—were entirely broken through. The matin, or the vesper prayer, was

no longer said ; the Sabbath was unmarked by its blessed distinctness ; the fêtes, whether of penitence or rejoicing, were unnoticed and cold in the hideous gloom that overspread the land, resting like the dead amid the dying.

Every hour, every moment served to impress the awful effects of the interdict more and more deeply on the minds of men. Was a child born, a single priest, in silence and in secrecy, as if the very act were a crime, sprinkled the baptismal water on its brow. Marriage, with all its gay ceremonies and feasts, was blotted, with other happy days, from the calendar of life. The dying died in fear, without prayer or confession, as if mercy had gone by ; and the dead, cast recklessly on the soil, or buried in unhallowed ground, were exposed, according to the credence of the day, to the visitation of demons and evil spirits. Even the doors of the cemeteries were closed ; and the last fond communion between the living and the dead,—that beautiful weakness which pours the heart out even on the cold, unanswering grave,—was struck out from the solaces of existence.

The bishops and clergy in the immediate neighbourhood of Dijon first began to observe the interdict ; and gradually, though steadily, the same awful privation of all religious form spread itself over France. Towards the north, however, and in the neighbourhood of the capital, the ecclesiastics were more slow in putting it in execution ; and long ere it had reached the borders of the Seine many a change had taken place in the fate of Guy de Coucy.

Having ascertained that the Cotereaux had really left his woods, De Coucy gave his whole thoughts to the scheme which had been proposed to him by his squire, Hugo de Barre, for surprising Sir Julian of the Mount and his fair daughter, and bringing them to his castle without letting them know, till after their arrival, into whose hands they had fallen.

Such out-of-the-way pieces of gallantry were very common in that age ; but there are difficulties, of

course, in all schemes ; and the difficulty of the present one was, so to surprise the party, that no bloodshed or injury might ensue ; for certainly, if ever there was an undertaking to which the warning against jesting with edged tools might be justly applied, it was this.

The brain, however, of Hugo de Barre, which for a great part of his life had been sterile, or at least lain fallow, seemed to have become productive of a sudden ; and he contrived a plan by which the page, who, from many a private reason of his own, was very willing to undertake the task, was to meet Sir Julian's party, disguised as a peasant, and mingling with the retinue, to forewarn the male party thereof of the proposed surprisal, enjoining them, at the same time, for the honour of the masculine quality of secrecy, not to reveal their purpose to the female part of the train. "For," observed Hugo de Barre, "a wofnan's head, as far as ever I could hear, is just like a funnel : whatever you pour into her ear is sure to run out at her mouth."

De Coucy staid not to controvert this ungallant position of his squire, but sent off in all haste to Gisors, for the purpose of preparing his château for the reception of such guests as far as his scanty means would permit. His purse, however, was soon exhausted ; and yet no great splendour reigned within his halls.

The air of absolute desolation, however, was done away ; and though the young knight had that sort of pride in the neatness of his horse, his arms, and his dress which, perhaps, amounted to foppery, he valued wealth too little himself to imagine that the lady of his love would despise him for the want of it. He could not help wishing, however, that the king had given another tournament, where, he doubted not, his lance would have served him to overthrow five or six antagonists, the ransom of whose horses and armour might have served to complete the preparations he could now only commence. It was a wish of the thirteenth century ; and though, perhaps, not assimilating very well with our ideas at present, it was quite in harmony

with the character of the times, when many a knight lived entirely by his prowess in the battle or the lists ; and when the ransom of his prisoners, or of the horses and arms of his antagonists, was held the most honourable of all revenues.

As the period approached in which De Coucy had reason to believe Count Julian and his train would pass near his castle, a warder was stationed continually in the beffroy to keep a constant watch upon the country around ; and many a time would the young knight himself climb into the high tower and gaze over the country spread out below.

Such was the position of the castle, and the predominating height of the watch-tower, that no considerable party could pass within many miles without being seen in some part of their way. In general, the principal roads lay open beneath the eye, traced out clear and distinct over the bosom of the country, as if upon a wide map : and with more eagerness and anxiety did De Coucy gaze upon the way, and track each group that he fancied might contain the form of Isadore of the Mount, than he had ever watched for Greek or Saracen. At length, one evening, as he was thus employing himself, he saw, at some distance, the dust of a cavalcade rise over the edge of a slight hill that bounded his view to the north-east. Then came a confused group of persons on horseback ; and, with a beating heart, De Coucy strained his eyes to see whether there were any female figures among the rest. Long before it was possible for him to ascertain, he had determined twenty times, both that there were and that there were not ; and changed his opinion as often. At length, however, something light seemed to be caught by the wind, and blown away to a little distance from the party, while one of the horsemen galloped out to recover it, and bring it back.

“ ‘Tis a woman’s veil !” cried De Coucy. “ ‘Tis she ! by the sword of my father !” and darting down the winding steps of the tower, whose turnings now seemed interminable, he rushed into the court, called,

to "The saddle!" and springing on his horse, which stood always prepared, he led his party into the woods, and laid his ambush at the foot of the hill, within a hundred yards of the road that led to Vernon.

All this was done with the prompt activity of a soldier long accustomed to quick and harassing warfare. In a few minutes, also, the disguises which had been prepared to render himself and his followers as like a party of Cotereaux as possible were assumed, and De Coucy waited impatiently for the arrival of the cavalcade. The moments now passed by with all that limping impotence of march that they ever seem to have in the eyes of expectation. For some time the knight reasoned himself into coolness by remembering the distance at which he had seen the party, the slowness with which they were advancing, and the rapidity with which he himself had taken up his position. For the next quarter of an hour he blamed his own hastiness of disposition, and called to mind a thousand instances in which he had deceived himself in regard to time.

He then thought they must be near; and, after listening for a few minutes, advanced a little to ascertain, when suddenly the sound of a horse's feet struck on his ear, and he waited only the first sight through the branches to make the signal of attack.

A moment after, however, he beheld, to his surprise and disappointment, the figure of a stout market-woman, mounted on a mare, whose feet had produced the noise which had attracted his attention, and whose passage left the road both silent and vacant once more. Another long pause succeeded, and De Coucy, now almost certain that the party he had seen must either have halted or turned from their course, sent out scouts in various directions, to gain more certain information. After a short space one returned and then another; all bringing the same news, that the roads on every side were clear; and that not the slightest sign of any large party was visible from the highest points in the neighbourhood.

Evening was now beginning to fall ; and, very sure that Count Julian would not travel during the night through a country infested by plunderers of all descriptions, the young knight, disappointed and gloomy, emerged with his followers from his concealment ; and once more bent his steps slowly towards his solitary hall.

"Perhaps," said he, mentally, as he pondered over his scheme and its want of success,—"perhaps I may have escaped more bitter disappointment—perchance she might have proved cold and heartless—perchance she might have loved me, yet been torn from me ;—and then, when my eye was once accustomed to see her lovely form gliding through the halls of my dwelling, how could I have afterward brooked its desolate vacancy ? When my ear had become habituated to the sound of her voice in my own home, how silent would it have seemed when she were gone ! No, no—doubtless I did but scheme myself pains. 'Tis better as it is."

While these reflections were passing in his mind, he had reached the bottom of the hill on which his castle stood, and turned his horse up the steep path. Naturally enough, as he did so, he raised his eyes to contemplate the black frowning battlements that were about to receive him once more to their stern solitude ; when, to his astonishment, he saw the flutter of a woman's dress upon the outward walls, and a gay group of youths and maidens were seen looking down upon him from his own castle.

De Coucy at first paused from mere surprise, well knowing that his own household offered nothing such as he there beheld ; but the next moment, as the form of Isadore of the Mount showed itself plainly to his sight, he struck his spurs into his horse's sides, and galloped forward like lightning, eager to lay himself open to all the disappointments over which he had moralized so finely but a moment before.

On entering the court, he found a multitude of squires stabling their horses with all the care that promised a

long stay ; and, the moment after he was accosted by old Sir Julian of the Mount himself, who informed him that, finding himself not so well as he could wish, he had come to crave his hospitality for a day's lodging, during which time he might communicate to him, he said, some important matter for his deep consideration. This last announcement was made in one of those low and solemn tones intended to convey great meaning ; and perhaps even Sir Julian wished to imply that his ostensible reason for visiting the castle of De Couey was but a fine political covering to veil the more immediate and interesting object of his coming.

“ But how now, Sir Guy ! ” added he ; “ surely you have been disguising yourself ! With that sack over your armour, for a *cotte d'armes*, and the elm branch twisted round your casque, you look marvellous like a Coterel.”

“ By my faith ! good Sir Julian,” replied De Couey, with his usual frankness, “ I look but like what I intended, then. The truth is, hearing of your passing, I arrayed my men like Cotereaux, and laid an ambush for you, intending to take you at a disadvantage, and making you prisoner, to bring you here ; where, in all gentle courtesy, I would have entreated your stay for some few days, to force a boar and hear a lay, and forget your weightier thoughts for a short space. But, by the holy rood ! I find I have made a strange mistake ; for, while I went to take you, it seems you have taken my castle itself ! ”

“ Good, good ! very good ! ” cried Sir Julian ; “ but come with me, Sir Guy. Isadore has found her way to the battlements already, and is looking out at the view, which she says is fine. For my part, I love no fine views but politic ones.—Come, follow me.—Let me see, which is the way ?—Oh, here—no, 'tisn't.—This is a marvellous stronghold, Sir Guy !—Which is the way ? ”

Cursing Sir Julian's slow vanity, in striving to lead the way through a castle he did not know, with its lord at his side, Sir Guy de Couey stepped forward, and,

with a foot of light, mounted the narrow staircase in the wall that led to the outer battlements.

"Stay, stay ! Sir Guy !" cried the old man. " By the rood ! you go so fast, 'tis impossible to follow you ! You young men forget we old men get short of breath ; and, though our brains be somewhat stronger than yours, 'tis said our legs are not altogether so swift."

De Coucy, obliged to curb his impatience, paused till Sir Julian came up, and then hurried forward to the spot where Isadore was gazing, or seeming to gaze, upon the prospect.

A very close observer, however, might have perceived that, though she did not turn round till the young knight was close to her, as his clanging step sounded along the battlements, a quick warm flush rose in her cheek ; and when she did turn to answer his greeting, there was that sort of glow in her countenance and sparkle in her eye which, strangely in opposition with the ceremonious form of her words, would have given matter for thought to any more quick-witted person than Count Julian of the Mount.

That worthy baron, however, wholly preoccupied with his own sublime thoughts, saw nothing to excite his surprise, but presented De Coucy to Isadore as a noble chief of Cotereaux, who would fain have taken them prisoner, had they not in the first instance stormed his castle, and "manned, or rather," said Sir Julian, "womaned, his wall," and the worthy old gentleman chuckled egregiously at his own wit. "Now that we are here, however," continued Sir Julian, "he invites us to stay for a few days, to which I give a willing consent : —what say you, Isadore ? You will find these woods even sweeter than those of Montmorency for your mornings' walks."

Isadore cast down her large dark eyes, as if she was afraid that the pleasure which such a proposal gave her might shine out too apparently. "Wherever you think fit to stay, my dear father," replied she, "must always be agreeable to me."

Matters being thus arranged, we shall not particu-

larize the passing of that evening, nor indeed of the next day. Suffice it to say, that Sir Julian found a moment to propose to De Coucy to enter into the coalition which was then forming between some of the most powerful barons of France with John King of England, in his quality of Duke of Normandy, and Ferrand Count of Flanders at their head, to resist the efforts which Philip Augustus was making to recover and augment the kingly authority.

"Do not reply, Sir Guy—do not reply hastily," concluded the old knight; "I give you two more days to consider the question in all its bearings; and on the third I will take my departure for Rouen, either embracing you as a brother in our enterprise, or thanking you for your hospitality, and relying on your secrecy."

De Coucy was glad to escape an immediate reply, well knowing that the only answer he could conscientiously make would but serve to irritate his guest, and perhaps precipitate his departure from the castle. He therefore let the matter rest, and applied himself, as far as his limited means would admit, to entertain Sir Julian and his suite, without derogating from the hospitality of his ancestors.

The communication of feeling between the young knight and his fair Isadore made much more rapid advances than his arrangements with Sir Julian. During the journey from Auvergne to Senlis each day's march had added something to their mutual love, and discovered it more and more to each other. It had shone out but in trifles, it is true; for Sir Julian had been constantly present, filling their ears with continual babble, to which the one was obliged to listen from filial duty, and the other from respect to her he loved. It had shone out but in trifles, but what is life but a mass of trifles, with one or two facts of graver import, scattered like jewels amid the seashore sands?—and though, perhaps, it was but a momentary smile, or a casual word, a glance, a tone, a movement, that betrayed their love to each other; it was the language that deep feelings speak, and deep feelings alone can read, but which, then, expresses a world more than words can ever tell.

When Isadore arrived at De Coucy's château, it wanted but one word to speak that she was deeply loved; and before she had been there twelve hours that word was spoken. We will therefore pass over that day,—which was a day of long, deep, sweet thought to Isadore of the Mount, and to De Coucy one of anxious hope, with just sufficient doubt to make it hope, not joy,—and we will come at once to the morning after.

'Twas in the fine old woods, in the immediate proximity of the castle, towards that hour of the morning when young lovers may be supposed to rise, and dull guardians to slumber in their beds. It was towards five o'clock, and the spot a very dangerous scene for any one whose heart was not iron, with some fair being near him. A deep glade of the wood, at the one end of which might be seen a single gray tower of the castle, here opened out upon the very edge of a steep descent, commanding one of these wide extensive views over rich and smiling lands that make the bosom glow and expand to all that is lovely. The sun was shining down from beyond the castle, checkering the grassy glade with soft shadows and bright light; and a clear small stream, that welled from a rock hard by, wound in and out among the roots of the trees, over a smooth gravelly bed; till, approaching the brink of the descent, it leaped over, as if in sport, and went bounding in sparkling joyousness into the rich valley below. All was in harmony—the soft air, and the birds singing their matins, and the blue sky overhead; so that hard must have been the heart indeed that did not then feel softened by the bland smiles of Nature.

Wandering down the glade, side by side, even at that early hour, came De Coucy and Isadore of the Mount, alone—for the waiting-maid, Alixe, was quite sufficiently discreet to toy with every buttercup as she passed; so that the space of full a hundred yards was ever interposed between the lovers and any other human creature.

"Oh, De Coucy!" said Isadore, proceeding with a conversation, which for various reasons is here omitted, "if I could but believe that your light gay heart was

capable of preserving such deep feelings as those you speak!"

"Indeed, indeed! and in **very** truth!" replied De Coucy, "my heart, sweet Isadore, is very, very different from what it seems in a gay and heartless world. I know not why, but from my youth I have ever covered my feelings from the eyes of my companions. I believe it was first, lest those who could not understand should laugh; and now it has become so much a habit, that often do I jest when I feel deepest, and laugh when my heart is far from merriment; and though you may have deemed that heart could never feel in any way, believe me now, when I tell you, that it has felt often, and deeply."

"Nay!" said Isadore, perhaps somewhat wilful in her mistake, "if you have felt such sensations so often, and so deeply, but little can be left for me."

"Nay, nay!" cried De Coucy eagerly. "You wrong my speech. I never loved but you. My feelings in the world, the feelings that I spoke of, have been for the sorrows and the cares of others—for the loss of friends—the breaking of fond ties—to see injustice, oppression, wrong;—to be misunderstood by those I esteemed—repelled where I would have shed my heart's blood to serve. Here have I felt all that man can feel; but I never loved but you. I never yet saw woman, before my eyes met yours, in whose hand I could put my hope and happiness, my life and honour, my peace of mind at present, and all the fond dreams we form for the future.—Isadore, do you believe me?"

She cast down her eyes for a moment, then raised them, to De Coucy's surprise, swimming with tears. "Perhaps I do," replied she.—"Do not let my tears astonish you, De Coucy," she added; "they are not all painful ones; for to find ones' self beloved as one would wish to be is very, very sweet. But still, good friend, I see much to make us fear for the future. The old are fond of wealth, De Coucy; and they forget affection. I would not that my tongue should for a moment prove so false to my heart as to proffer one word against my father; but, I fear me, he will look for riches in a husband to his daughter."

"And will such considerations weigh with you, Isadore?" demanded De Coucy sadly.

"Not for a moment!" replied she. "Did I choose for myself, I would sooner, far sooner, that the man I loved should be as poor a knight as ever braced on a shield; that I might endow him with my wealth, and bring him something more worthy than this poor hand. But can I oppose my father's will, De Coucy?"

"What!" cried the knight; "and will you, Isadore, wed the first wealthy lover he chooses to propose, and yield yourself, a cold, inanimate slave, to one man, while your heart is given to another?"

"Hush, hush!" cried Isadore,—"never, De Coucy, never!—I will never wed any man against my father's will; so far my duty as a child compels me:—but I will never, never marry any man—but—but—what shall I say?—but one I love."

"Oh, say something more, sweet, sweet girl!" cried the young knight eagerly;—"say something more, to give my heart some firm assurance—let that promise be to me!"

"Well, well!" said Isadore, speaking quick, as if afraid the words should be stayed upon her very lip; "no one but you. Will that content you?"

De Coucy pressed her hand to his lips and to his heart, with all that transport of gratitude that the most invaluable gift a woman can bestow deserves; and yet he pressed her to repeat her promise. He feared, he said, the many powerful arts with which friends work on a woman's mind,—the persuasions, the threats, the false reports; and he ceased not till he had won her to repeat again and again, with all the vows that could bind her heart to his, that her hand should never be given to another.

"They may cloister me in a convent," she said, as the very reiteration rendered her promise bolder; and his ardent and passionate professions made simple assurances seem cold: "but I deem not they will do it; for my father, though quick in his disposition, and immoveable in what he determines, loves me, I think, too

well, to part with me willingly for ever. He may threaten it ; but he will not execute his threat.—But oh ! De Coucy, have a care that you urge him not to such a point, that he shall say my hand shall never be yours ; for if once 'tis said, he will hold it a matter of honour never to retract, though he saw us both dying at his feet."

De Coucy promised to be patient, and to be circumspect, and all that lover could promise ; and, engaging Isadore to sit down on a mossy seat that Nature herself had formed with the roots of an old oak, he occupied the vacant minutes with all those sweet pourings forth of the heart to which love, and youth, and imagination alone dare give way, in this cold and stony world. Isadore's eyes were bent upon him, her hand lay in his, and each was fully occupied with the other, when a sort of half-scream from the waiting-maid Alixe woke them from their dreams ; and, looking up, they found themselves in the presence of old Sir Julian of the Mount !

"Good ! good ! marvellous good !" cried the old knight.—"Get thee in, Isadore—without a word !—Get thee in too, good mistress looker-on !" he added to Alixe ; "'tis well thou art not a man instead of a woman, or I would curry thy hide for thee. Get thee in, I say !—I must deal with our noble host alone."

Isadore obeyed her father's commands in silence, turning an imploring look to De Coucy, as if once more to counsel patience. Alixe followed, grumbling ; and the old knight, turning to De Coucy, addressed him in a tone of ironical compliment, intended to be more bitter than the most unmixed abuse.

"A thousand thanks ! a thousand thanks ! *beau sire !*" he said, "for your disinterested hospitality. Good sooth, 'twas a pity your plan for taking us prisoners did not go forward ; for now you might have a fair excuse for keeping us so too. 'Twould have been an agreeable surprise to us all—to me especially ; and I thank you for it. Doubtless, you proposed to marry my daughter without my knowledge also, and add an-

other agreeable surprise. I thank you for that, too, *beau sire!*"

" You mistake me, good Sir Julian," replied De Coucy calmly: " I did not propose to wed your daughter without your knowledge, but hoped that your consent would follow your knowledge of our love. I am not rich, but I do believe that want of wealth is the only objection you could have—"

" And enough, surely;" interrupted Sir Julian. " What! Is that black castle, and half a hundred roods of wild wood, a match for ten thousand marks a-year, which my child is heir to?—*Beau sire*, you do mistake. Doubtless you are very liberal, where you give away other people's property to receive yourself; but I am of a less generous disposition.—Besides," he added, more coolly, " to put the matter to rest for ever, Sir Guy de Coucy, know that I have solemnly promised my daughter's hand to the noble Guillaume de la Roche Guyon."

" Promised her hand!" exclaimed De Coucy, " to Guillaume de la Roche Guyon!—Dissembling traitor! By the holy rood! he shall undergo my challenge, and die for his cold treachery!"

" Mark me!—mark me! I pray you, *beau sire!*" cried Sir Julian of the Mount in the same cool tone. " Should Guillaume de la Roche Guyon fall under your lance, you shall never have my child,—so help me Heaven!—except with my curse upon her head. Ay! and even were he to die, or fall in the wars that are coming—for I give her not to him till they be passed,—you should not have her then—without," he added with a sneer, " I was your prisoner chained hand and foot; and you could offer me acre with acre for my own land. But perhaps you still intend to keep me prisoner, here in your stronghold. Such things have been done, I know."

" They will never be done by me, Count Julian," replied De Coucy; " though it is with pain I see you go, and would fain persuade you to stay and think better of my suit; yet my drawbridge shall fall at your

command, as readily as at my own. Yet, let me beseech you to think—I would not boast;—and still let me say, my name and deeds are not unknown in the world. The wealth that once my race possessed has not been squandered in feasting and revelry, but in the wars of the blessed cross; in the service of religion and honour. As to this Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, I will undertake, within a brief space, to bring you his formal renunciation of your promise."

"It cannot be, sir!—it cannot be!" interrupted Sir Julian. "I have told you my mind.—What I have said is fixed as fate. If you will let me go, within this hour I depart from your castle. If you will not, the dishonour be on your own head.—Make no more efforts, sir," he added, seeing De Coucy about to speak. "The words once passed from my mouth are never recalled. Ask Giles, my squire, sir,—ask my attendants all. They will tell you the same thing. What Count Julian of the Mount has spoken is as immovable as the earth."

So saying, the old man turned, and walked back to the castle, followed by De Coucy, mourning over the breaking of the bright day-dream which, like one of the fine gossamers that glitter in the summer, had drawn one bright shining line across his path, but had snapped for ever with the first touch.

Sir Julian's retinue were soon prepared, and the horses saddled in the court-yard; and, when all was ready, the old knight brought down his daughter to depart. She was closely veiled, but still De Coucy saw that she was weeping, and advanced to place her on horseback. At that moment, however, one of the squires, evidently seeing that all was not right between his lord and the lord of the castle, thrust himself in the way.

"Back, serf!" exclaimed De Coucy, laying his hand upon his collar, and in an instant he was seen reeling to the other side of the court, as if he had been hurled from a catapult. In the mean while, De Coucy raised Isadore in his arms, and, placing her on her horse,

pressed her slightly in his embrace, saying in a low tone, "Be constant, and we may win yet;" then yielding the place to Sir Julian, who approached, he ordered the drawbridge of the castle to be lowered.

The train passed through the arch and over the bridge; and De Coucy advanced to the barbican to catch the last look, as they wound down the hill. Isadore could not resist, and waved her hand for an instant before they were out of sight. De Coucy's heart swelled as if it would have burst; but at that moment his squire approached, and put into his hand a small packet, neatly folded and sealed, which, he said, Alixe the waiting-woman had given him for his lord. De Coucy eagerly tore it open. It contained a lock of dark hair, with the words "Till death" written in the envelope. De Coucy pressed it to his heart, and turned to re-enter the castle.

"Haw, haw! Haw, haw!" cried Gallon the Fool, perched on the battlements. "Haw, haw, haw! Haw, haw!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

By tardy conveyances, and over antediluvian roads, news travelled slowly in the days we speak of; and the interdict which we have seen pronounced at Dijon, and unknown at De Coucy Magny, was even some hours older before the report thereof reached Compiègne.

We must beg the gentle reader to remember a sunny-faced youth, for whom the fair Queen of France, Agnes de Meranie, was, when last we left him, working a gay coat-of-arms. This garment, which it was then customary to bear over the armour, was destined to be worn by one whose sad place in history has caused many a tear,—Arthur the son of that Geoffrey Plan-

tagenet who was elder brother of John Lackland, the meanest and most pitiful villain that ever wore a crown.

How it happened that, on the death of Richard Cœur de Lion, the barons of England adhered to a usurper they despised rather than to their legitimate prince, forms no part of this history. Suffice it, that John ruled in England, and also retained possession of all the feoffs of his family in France, Normandy, Poitou, Anjou, and Aquitaine; leaving to Arthur naught but the duchy of Brittany, which descended to him from Constance his mother.

It is not, however, to be thought that Arthur endured with patience his uncle's usurpation of his rights. Far from it. Brought up at the court of France, he clung to Philip Augustus, the friend in whose arms his father had died, and ceased not to importune him for aid to recover his dominions. Philip's limited means, fatigued already by many vast enterprises, for long prevented him from lending that succour to the young prince which every principle of policy and generosity stimulated him to grant. But while no national cause of warfare existed to make the war against King John popular with the barons of France; and while the vassals of the English king, though a usurper, remained united in their attachment to him, Philip felt that to attempt the forcible assertion of Arthur's rights would be altogether hopeless. He waited, therefore, watching his opportunity, very certain that the weak frivolity or the treacherous depravity of John's character would soon either alienate some portion of his own vassals, or furnish matter of quarrel for the barons of France.

Several years thus passed after Richard's death, drawn out in idle treaties and fruitless negotiations:—treaties which in all ages have been but written parchments; and negotiations which in most instances are but concatenations of frauds. At length, as Philip had foreseen, the combination of folly and wickedness which formed the principal point of John's mind laid him open to the long-meditated blow.

In one of his spirits of levity, beholding in the midst of her attendants the beautiful Isabella of Angoulême, affianced to Hugues le Brun, de Lusignan, Comte de la Marche, the English monarch—without the least hesitation on the score of honour, which he never knew, or decency, which he never practised—ordered her to be carried off from the midst of her attendants, and borne to the castle of the Gueret, where he soon induced her to forget her former engagements with his vassal.

The barons of Poitou, indignant at the insult offered to their order in the person of one of their noblest companions, and to their family in the near relation of all the most distinguished nobles of the province, appealed to the court of Philip Augustus, as John's sovereign for his feoffs in France. Philip, glad to establish the rights of his court, summoned the King of England before his peers, as Count of Anjou; and on his refusing to appear, eagerly took advantage of the fresh kindled indignation of the barons of Poitou and Anjou to urge the rights of Arthur to the heritage of the Plantagenets.

Already in revolt against John, a great part of each of those provinces instantly acknowledged Arthur for their sovereign; and the indignant nobles flocked to Paris to greet him, and induce him to place himself at their head. Arthur beheld himself now at the top of that tide which knows no ebb, but leads on to ruin or to glory: and, accepting at once the offers of the revolted barons, he pressed Philip Augustus to give him the belt and spurs of a knight, though still scarcely more than a boy; and to let him try his fortune against his usurping uncle in the field.

Philip saw difficulties and dangers in the undertaking; but, knowing the power of opportunity, he yielded: not, however, without taking every precaution to ensure success to the young prince's enterprise. For the festivities that were to precede the ceremony of Arthur's knighthood, he called together all those barons who were most likely, from ancient enmity to John, or ancient friendship for the dead Geoffrey, or from personal

regard for himself, or general love of excitement and danger—or, in short, from any of those causes that might move the minds of men towards his purpose,—to aid in establishing Arthur in the continental seoffs, at least, of the house of Plantagenet.

He took care, too, to dazzle them with splendour and display, and to render the ceremonies which accompanied the prince's reception as a knight as gay and glittering as possible.

It was for this occasion that Agnes de Meranie, while Philip was absent receiving the final refusal of John to appear before his court, employed her time in embroidering the coat-of-arms which the young knight was to wear after his reception.

Although the ceremony was solemn, and the details magnificent, we will not here enter into any account of the creation of a knight, reserving it for some occasion where we have not spent so much time in description. Suffice it that the ceremony was over, and the young knight stood before his godfather in chivalry belted and spurred, and clothed in the full armour of a knight. His beaver was up, and his young and almost feminine face would have formed a strange contrast with his warlike array, had it not been for the fire of the Plantagenets beaming out in his eye, and asserting his right to the proud crest he bore,—where a bunch of broom was supported by the triple figure of a lion, a unicorn, and a griffin, the ancient crest of the fabulous King Arthur.

After a few maxims of chivalry, heard with profound respect by all the knights present, Philip Augustus rose, and, taking Arthur by the hand, led the way from the chapel into his grand council-chamber, where, having seated himself on his throne, he placed the prince on his right-hand; and the barons having ranged themselves round the council-board, the king addressed them thus :—

“ Fair knights, and noble barons of Anjou and Poitou! —for to you, among all the honourable lords and knights here present, I first address myself,—at your

instant prayer, that we should take some measures to free you from the tyranny of a usurper, and restore to you your lawful suzerain, we are about to yield you our well-beloved cousin and son, Arthur, whom we tender as dearly as if he were sprung from our own blood. Guard him, therefore, nobly. Be ye to him true and faithful,—for Arthur Plantagenet is your lawful suzerain, and none other, as son of Geoffrey, elder brother of that same John who now usurps his rights : I, therefore, Philip, King of France, your sovereign and his, now command you to do homage to him as your liege lord."

At these words, each of the barons he addressed rose in turn, and, advancing, knelt before the young prince, over whose fair and noble countenance a blush of generous embarrassment spread itself, as he saw some of the best knights in France bend the knee before him. One after another, also, the barons pronounced the formula of homage to the following effect :—

"I, Hugo le Brun, Sire de Lusignan, Comte de la Marche, do liege homage to Arthur Plantagenet, my born lord and suzerain,—save and except always the rights of the King of France. I will yield him honourable service ; I will ransom him in captivity ; and I will offer no evil to his daughter or his wife in his house dwelling."

After this, taking the right hand of each in his, Arthur kissed them on the mouth, which completed the ceremony of the homage.

"And now, fair barons," said Philip, "though in no degree do I doubt your knightly valour, or suppose that, even by your own powers, together with this noble youth's good right, and God to boot, you could not chase from Anjou, Poitou, and Normandy the traitor John and his plundering bands, yet it befits me not to let my cousin and godson go without some help from me :—name, therefore, my fair knight," he continued, turning to Arthur, "such of my valiant barons as, in thy good suit, thou judgest fit to help thee valiantly in this thy warfare ; and, by my faith ! he that refuses to serve

thee as he would me, shall be looked upon as my enemy!—Yet remember,” added the king, anxious to prevent offence where Arthur’s choice might *not* fall, although such selections were common in that day, and not considered invidious,—“remember that it is not by worthiness and valour alone that you must judge,—for then, among the knights of France, your decision would be difficult; but there are, as I have before shown you, many points which render some of the barons more capable of assisting you against John of England than others;—such as, their territories lying near the war, their followers being horse or foot, and many other considerations which must guide you as you choose.”

“Oh, beau sire,” replied Arthur, eagerly, “if it rests with me to choose, I name at once that Sir Guy de Coucy I saw at the tournament of the Champeaux. There is the lion in his eye, and I have heard how in the battle of Tyre he slew nineteen Saracens with his own hand.”

“He shall be sent to before the year is older by a day,” replied Philip. “His castle is but one day’s journey from this place. I doubt me though, from what I have heard, that his retinue is but small. However, we will summon all the vassals from the lands of his aunt’s husband, the Lord of Tankerville, which will give him the leading of a prince; and, in the mean time, as that may take long, we will give him command to gather a band of Brabançois; which may be soon done, for the country is full of them, unhappily.—But speak again, Arthur. Whom name you next?”

“I would say, Hugues de Dampierre, and the Sire de Beaujeu,” replied Arthur, looking towards the end of the table where those two barons sat, “if I thought they would willingly come.”

“By my life, they will!” replied Philip.—“What say you, Imbert de Beaujeu?—What say you, Hugues de Dampierre?”

“For my part,” replied Hugues de Dampierre, “you well know, beau sire, that I am always ready to put my foot in the stirrup in any honourable cause. I

must, however, have twenty days to raise my vassals ; but I pledge myself, on the twenty-first day from this, to be at the city of Tours, followed by sixty as good knights as ever couched a lance, all ready to uphold Prince Arthur with hand and heart."

"Thanks, thanks ! beau sire," replied Arthur, in an ecstasy of delight. "That will be aid, indeed !" Then, careful not to offend the barons of Poitou by seeming to place more confidence in the strength of others than in their efforts in his cause, he added, "If, even by the assistance of the noble barons of Poitou alone, I could not have conquered my feoffs in France, such generous succour would render my success certain ; and in truth, I think that if the Sire de Beaujeu and the Count de Nevers, who looks as if he loved me, will but hold me out a helping hand, I will undertake to win back my crown of England from my bad uncle's head."

"That will I,—that will I, boy !" said the blunt Count de Nevers. "Hervey de Donzy will lend you his hand willingly, and his sword in it to boot. Ay, and if I bring thee not a hundred good lances to Tours at the end of twenty days, call me recreant an you will. My say is said !"

"And I," said Imbert de Beaujeu, "will be there also, with as many men as I can muster, and as many friends as love me, from the other bank of the Loire. So, set thy mind at ease, fair prince, for we will win thee back the feoffs of the Plantagenets, or many a war-horse shall run masterless, and many a casque be empty."

Arthur was expressing his glad thanks for promises which plumed his young hope like an eagle, and Philip Augustus was dictating to a clerk a summons to De Coucy to render himself instantly to Paris, with what servants of arms he could collect,—if he were willing to serve Arthur Duke of Brittany in his righteous quarrel, when the seats which had remained vacant round the council-chamber were filled by the arrival of the bishops of Paris, the Archbishop of Rheims, and

several other bishops and mitred abbots, who had not assisted at the ceremony of Arthur's knighthood.)

" You come late, holy fathers," said Philip, slightly turning round. " The ceremony is over, and the council nearly so;" and he proceeded with what he was dictating to the clerk.

The clergy replied not, but by a whisper among themselves; yet it was easy to judge, from their grave and wrinkled brows and anxious eyes, that some matter of deep moment sat heavily on the mind of each. The moment after, however, the door of the council-chamber again opened, and two ecclesiastics entered, who, by the distinctive marks which characterize national features, might at once be pronounced Italians.

The clerk who wrote from Philip's dictation was kneeling at the table beside the monarch's chair, so that, speaking in a low voice, the king naturally bent his head over him, and consequently took no notice of the two strangers, till he was surprised into looking up, by hearing a deep loud voice begin to read, in Latin, all the most heavy denunciations of the church against his realm and person.

" By the holy Virgin Mother of our Lord!" cried the king, his brow reddening and glowing like heated iron, " this insolence is beyond belief! Have they then dared to put our realm in interdict?"

This question, though made generally, was too evidently applied to the bishops for them to escape reply, and the Archbishop of Rheims, though with a flush on his cheek that bespoke no small anxiety for the result, replied boldly, at least as far as words went,—

" It is but too true, sire. Our holy father the pope, the common head of the great Christian church, after having in vain attempted to lead you by gentle means to religious obedience, has at length been compelled, in some sort, to use severity; as a kind parent is often obliged to chastise his—"

" How now!" cried Philip, in a voice of thunder: " Dare *you* use such language to me? I marvel you sink not to the earth, bishop, rather than so pronounce

your own condemnation!—Put those men forth!” he continued, pointing to the two Italians, who, not understanding any thing that was said at the table, continued to read aloud the interdict and anathema, interrupting and drowning every other voice, with a sort of thorough bass of curses, that, detached and disjointed as they were, almost approached the ridiculous. “Put them forth!” thundered the king to his men-at-arms. “If they go not willingly, cast them out headlong!—But no!” he added, after a moment, “they are but instruments—use them firmly, but courteously, sergeant. Let me not see them again.—And now, archbishop, tell me, have you dared to give your countenance and assent to this bold insolence of the pontiff of Rome?”

“Alas! sire, what could I do?” demanded the archbishop, in a much more humble tone than that which he had before used.

“What could you do!” exclaimed Philip. “By the *joyeuse* of St. Charlemagne! do you ask me what you could do? Assert the rights of the clergy of France!—assert the rights of the king!—refuse to recognise the usurped power of an ambitious prelate! Yield him obedience in lawful things; but stand firmly against him where he stretched out his hand to seize a prerogative that belongs not to his place!—This could you have done, Sir Bishop! and, by the Lord that liveth, you shall find it the worse for you that you have *not* done it!”

“But, sire,” urged one of the prelates on the king’s right, “the blessed pope is our general and common father!”

“Is it the act of a father to invade his children’s rights?” demanded Philip in the same vehement tone; “is it not rather the act of a bad stepfather, who, coming in, pillages his new wife’s children of their inheritance?”

“By my life! a good likeness have you found, Sir King!” said the blunt Count de Nevers. “I never heard a better. The holy church is the poor simple wife, who takes for her second husband this Pope Inno-

cent, who tries to pillage the children—namely, the church of France—of their rights of deciding on all ecclesiastical questions within the realm."

"It is too true, indeed!" said the king.—"Now, mark me, prelates of France! But you first, Archbishop of Rheims! Did you not solemnly pronounce the dissolution of my marriage with Ingerburge of Denmark, after mature consideration and consultation with a general synod of the clergy of France?"

"It is true, indeed, I did, sire!" replied the archbishop. "But—"

"But me no buts! sir," replied the king. "I will none of them! You did pronounce the divorce. I have it under your hand, and that is enough.—And you, Bishop of Paris? You of Soissons?—and you?—and you?—and you?" he continued, turning to the prelates, one after the other.

No one could deny the sentence of divorce which they had pronounced some years before, and Philip proceeded.

"Well then, by the Lord Almighty, I swear, that you *must* and *shall* support your sentence! If you were wrong, you shall bear the blame and the punishment; not I—no, nor one I love better than myself. Let that bishop in France who did not pronounce sentence of divorce between Ingerburge and myself enforce the interdict within his diocese if he will; but whosoever shall do so, bishop or abbot, whose hand is to that sentence, I will cast him forth from his diocese, and his feoffs, and his lands. I will strip him of his wealth and his rank, and banish him from my realms for ever. Let it be marked and remembered! for, as I am a crowned king, I will keep my word to the letter!"

Philip spoke in that firm, deep, determined tone which gave no reason to hope or expect that any thing on earth would make him change his purpose. And after he had done, he laid his hand still clasped upon the table, the rigid sinews seeming with difficulty to relax in the least from the tension into which the vehement excitement of his mind had drawn them. He

glanced his eyes, too, from countenance to countenance of the bishops, with a look that seemed to dare them to show one sign of resistance.

But all their eyes were cast down in bitter silence, each well knowing that the fault, however it arose, lay among themselves ; and Philip, after a moment's pause, rose from the table, exclaiming—"Lords and knights. the council is over ;" and, followed by Arthur and the principal part of the barons, he left the hall.

CHAPTER XIX.

I LOVE not to see any one depart, for the sad magic of fancy is sure to conjure up a host of phantasm dangers and sorrows, to fill the space between the instant present, and that far distant one when the same form shall again stand before us. We are sure, too, that Time must work his bitter commission,—that he must impair, or cast down, or destroy ; and I know hardly any pitch of human misery so great, that when we see a beloved form leave us, we may justly hope, on our next meeting; to find all circumstances of a brighter aspect. Make up our accounts how we will with Fate, Time is always in the balance against us.

The last sight of Isadore of the Mount called up in the breast of Guy de Coucy as sombre a train of thoughts as ever invaded the heart of man since the Fall. When might he see her again ? he asked himself, and what might intervene ? Would she not forget him ? would she indeed be his till death ? Would not the slow flowing of hour after hour, with all the obliterating circumstance of time's current, efface his image from her memory ? and even if her heart still retained the traces that young affection had there imprinted, what but misery would it bring to both ? He had spoken hopes to her ear that he did not feel himself ;

and when he looked up at the large dark mass of towers and battlements before him, as he turned back from the barbican, it struck his eye with the cold, dead, unhopeful aspect of a tomb. He entered it, however, and proceeding direct to the inner court, approached the foot of the watch-tower, the small narrow door of which opened there, without communicating with any other building.

De Coucy paced up its manifold steps, and, stationing himself at the opening, fixed his eyes upon the skirt of the forest, where the road emerged, waiting for one more glance of her he loved, though the distance made the sight but a mere slave of fancy. In about a quarter of an hour, the train of Sir Julian appeared, issuing from the forest ; and De Coucy gazed, and gazed, upon the woman's form that rode beside the chief of the horsemen, till the whole became an indistinct mass of dark spots, as they wound onward towards Vernon.

Feeling, he knew not why, an abhorrence to his own solitary hall, the young knight remained leaning his arms upon the slight balustrade of the beffroy-tower, which, open on all sides, was only carried up farther by four small pillars supporting the roof, where hung the heavy bell called the *bancloche*. As he thus continued meditating on all that was gloomy in his situation, his eyes still strayed heedlessly over the prospect ; sometimes turning in the direction of Paris, as he thought of seeking fortune and honour in arms ; sometimes looking again towards Vernon, though the object of his love was no longer visible.

On the road from Paris, however, two objects were to be seen, which he had not remarked before. The first was the figure of a man on foot, at about half a mile's distance from the castle, to which it was slowly approaching : the other was still so far off that De Coucy could not distinguish at first whether it was a horseman or some wayfarer on foot ; but the rapidity with which it passed the various rises and falls of the road soon showed him, that, whoever it was, was not

only mounted, but proceeding at the full speed of a quick horse.

For a moment or two, from old habits of observation as a soldier, De Couey watched its approach; but then again, really careless about every thing that did not refer to his more absorbing feelings, he turned from the view, and slowly descended the steps of the tower.

His feet turned once more mechanically to the draw-bridge, and placing himself under the arch of the barbican, he leaned his tall graceful figure against one of the enormous door-posts, revolving a thousand vague schemes for his future existence. The strong swimmer, Hope, still struggled up through the waves that Reflection poured continually on his head; and De Coucy's dreams were still of how he might win high fortune and Isadore of the Mount.

Should he, in the first place, he asked himself, defy Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, and make him yield his claim? But no—he remembered the serious vow of the old count; and he saw that by so doing he should but cast another obstacle on the pile already heaped up between him and his purpose. Sir Julian had said, too, that Isadore's hand was not to be given away till the coming wars were over. Those wars might be long, De Coucy thought, and uncertain:—and hope lives upon reprieves. He must trust to accident, and in the mean time strive manfully to repair the wrong that Fortune had done him. But how? was the question. Tournaments, wars,—all required some equipment, and his shrunken purse contained not a single besant.

“Oh! 'tis a steep and rugged ascent!” thought De Coucy, “that same hill of Fortune; and the man must labour hard that would climb it, like yon old man, toiling up the steep path that leads hither.”

Such was the only notice that the young knight at first took of the weary foot-traveller he had seen from above; but gradually the figure, dressed in its long brown robe, with the white beard streaming down to the girdle, appeared more familiar to him; and a few

steps more, as the old man advanced, called fully to his remembrance the hermit whose skill had so speedily brought about the cure of his bruises in Auvergne, and whom we have since had more than one occasion to bring upon the scene.

De Coucy had, by nature, that true spirit of chivalrous gallantry, even the madness of which has been rendered beautiful by the great Spaniard. No sooner did he recognise the old man than he advanced to meet him, and aided him as carefully up the steep ascent as a son might aid a parent.

"Welcome, good father hermit!" said he. "Come you here by accident, or come you to rest for a while at the hold of so poor a knight as myself?"

"I came to see whether thou wert alive or dead," replied the hermit. "I knew not whether some new folly might not have taken thee from the land of the living."

"Not yet," replied De Coucy, with a smile: "my fate is yet an unsealed one. But, in faith, good father, I am glad to see thee; for, when thou hast broken thy fast in my hall I would fain ask thee for some few words of good counsel."

"To follow your own after you have asked mine?" replied the hermit. "Such is the way with man, at least. But first, as you say, my son, I will break my fast. Bid some of the lazy herd that of course feed on you seek me some cresses from the brook, and give me a draught of water."

"Must such be your sole food, good ~~hermit~~?" demanded De Coucy. "Will not your vow admit of some more nourishing repast, after so long a journey too?"

"I seek naught better," replied the hermit, as De Coucy led him into the hall. "I am not one of those who hold that man was formed to gnaw the flesh of all harmless beasts, as if he were, indeed, but a more cowardly sort of tiger. Let your men give me what I ask,—somewhat that never felt the throb of life, or the sting of death,—those wholesome herbs that God gave

to be food to all that live, to bless the sight with their beauty, and the smell with their odour, and the palate with their grateful freshness. Give me no tiger's food.

—But thou lookest sad, my son," he added, gazing in De Coucy's face, from which much of the sparkling expression of undimmed gayety of heart that used once to shine out in every feature had now passed away.

"I *am* sad, good hermit," replied the young knight. "Time holds two cups, I have heard say, both of which each man must drink in the course of his life:—either now the sweet, and then the bitter; or the bitter first, and the sweet after;—or else, mingling them both together, taste the mixed beverage through existence. Now, I have known much careless happiness in the days past, and I am beginning to quaff off the bitter bowl, Sir Hermit."

"There is but one resource," said the hermit:—"there is but one resource, my son!"

"And what is that?" demanded De Coucy. "Do you mean death?"

"Nay," replied the old man; "I meant Christ's cross. There is the hope, and the succour, and the reward for all evils suffered in this life! Mark me as I sit here before thee:—didst thou ever see a thing more withered,—broken,—worn? And yet I was once full of green strength, and flourishing,—as proud a thing as ever trampled on his mother earth: rich, honoured, renowned,—I was a very giant in my vanity! My sway stretched over wide, wide lands. My lance was always in the vanward of the battle; my voice was heard in courts, and my counsel was listened to by kings. I held in my arms the first young love of my heart; and, strange to say! that love increased, and grew to such absorbing passion, that, as years rolled on, I quitted all for it,—ambition, strife, pride, friendship,—all!"

"Methinks, surely," said De Coucy, with all his feelings for Isadore fresh on his heart's surface, "such were the way to be happy!"

"As much as the way for a gambler to win is to

stake all his wealth upon one cast," replied the hermit. "But, mark me!—she died, and left me childless,—hopeless,—alone! And I went out into the world to search for something that might refill the void her loss had left,—not in my heart, for that was as a sepulchre to my dead love, never to be opened again,—no, but to fill the void in my thoughts,—to give me something to think of—to care for. I went among men of my own age (for I was then unbroken), but I found them feelingless or brutal, sensual, and voluptuous; either plunderers of their neighbours, or mere eaters and drinkers of fifty. I then went among the old, but I found them querulous and tetchy; brimful of their own miseries, and as selfish in their particular pains as the others in their particular pleasures. I went among the young, and there I found generous feelings and unworn thoughts; and free and noble hearts, from which the accursed chisel of Time had never hewn out the finer and more exquisite touches of Nature's perfecting hand:—but then, I found the wild, ungovernable struggling of the war-horse for the battle-plain; the light, thoughtless impatience of the flower-changing butterfly,—and I gave it all up as a hopeless search, and sunk back into my loneliness again. My soul withered; my mind got twisted and awry, like the black stumps of the acacia on the sterile plains of the desert; and I lived on in murmuring grief and misanthropy till came a blessed light upon my mind, and I found *that* peace at the foot of Christ's cross which the world and its things could never give. Then it was I quitted the habitations of men, in whose commune I had found no consolation, and gave myself up to the brighter hopes that opened to me from the world beyond!"

De Coucy was listening with interest when the sound of the warder's horn from one of the towers announced that something was in sight of sufficient importance to call for immediate attention.

"Where is Hugo de Barre," exclaimed the knight, starting up; and, excusing this incivility to the hermit, he proceeded to ascertain the cause of the interruption.

"Hugo de Barre is in the tower himself, beau sire," replied old Onfroy the seneschal, whom De Coucy crossed at the hall-door, just as he was carrying in a platter full of herbs to the hermit, with no small symptoms of respect. "I see not why he puts himself up there to blow his horn, as soon as he comes back! He was never created warder, I trow!"

Without staying to notice the old man's stickling for prerogative, De Coucy hastened to demand of the squire wherefore he had sounded the great warder-horn which hung in the watch-tower.

"One of the king's sergeants-at-arms," cried Hugo, from the top of the tower, "is but now riding up the hill to the castle, as fast as he can come, beau sire."

"Shut the gates!" exclaimed De Coucy. "Up with the bridge!"

These orders were just obeyed, when the king's sergeant, whom Hugo had seen from above, rode up and blew his horn before the gates. De Coucy had by this time mounted the outer wall, and, looking down upon the royal officer, demanded, "Whence come ye, Sir Sergeant, and whom seek ye?"

"I come from Philip King of France," replied the sergeant, "and seek Sir Guy de Coucy, châtelain of De Coucy Magny."

"If you seek for no homage or man-service, in the king's name, for these my free lands of Magny," replied De Coucy, "my gates shall open, and my bridge shall fall; but, if you come to seek liege homage, return to our beau sire, the king, and tell him, that of my own hand I hold these lands; that for them I am not his man; but that they were given as free share, by Clovis, to their first possessor, from whom to me, through father and child, they have by right descended."

"I come with no claim, beau sire," replied the royal messenger, "but simply bear you a loving letter from my liege lord, Sir* Philip the king, with hearty greetings on his part."

* This must not be looked upon as an expression hazarded without authority, notwithstanding its homeliness. The only titles of honour known in those

"Open the gates, then," cried De Coucy; still, however, taking the precaution to add, in a loud voice,—"Mark, all men, that this is not in sign or token of homage or service; but merely as a courtesy to the messenger of the lord king!" So unsettled and insecure was the right of property in those days, and such were the precautions necessary to guard every act that might be construed into vassalage!

De Coucy descended to receive the messenger; and on entering the hall found the old seneschal still busy in serving the hermit, and apparently bestowing on him a full, true, and particular account of the family of the De Coucys, as well as of his young lord's virtues, exploits, and adventures, with the profound and inexhaustible garrulity of an old and favoured servant. At the knight's approach, however, he withdrew; and the king's sergeant-at-arms was ushered into the hall.

"I was commanded to wait no answer, beau sire," said the man, delivering the packet into the châtelain's hand. "The king, trusting to the known loyalty and valour of the Sire de Coucy, deemed that there would be but one reply, when he was called to high deeds and a good cause."

"By my faith!" exclaimed the knight, "I hope some one has dared to touch the glove I hung up in the queen's good quarrel! I will drive my lance through his heart if it be defended with triple iron! But I see thou art in haste, good friend. Drain one cup of wine, and thou shalt depart."

De Coucy cut not the silk that tied the packet till the messenger was gone. Then, however, he opened it eagerly, and read:—

"To our faithful and well-beloved Sir Guy de Coucy, these. Having undertaken and pledged our kingly word to Arthur Plantagenet, Duke of Brittany, our well-beloved

days were *Monseigneur, My Lord*; *Illustres Seigneurs*, applied in general to an assembly of nobles; and *Beau Sire*, or Fair Sir, which was not only bestowed upon kings on all occasions, but, even as lately as the reign of St Louis, was addressed to God himself. Many orayers beginning *Beau Sire Dieu* are still extant.

cousin and godson in arms, to aid him and assist him to the utmost of our power in his just and righteous war against John of Anjou, calling himself King of England: and he, Arthur, our cousin as aforesaid, having desired us to use our best entreaty and endeavour to prevail on you, Sir Guy de Coucy, renowned in arms, to aid with your body and friends in his aforesaid just wars; we therefore, thus moved, do beg, as a king may beg, that you will instantly on the reading hereof, call together your vassals and followers, knights, squires, and servants of arms, together with all persons of good heart and prowess in war, volunteers or mercenaries, as the case may be, to join the aforesaid Arthur at our court of the city of Paris, within ten days from the date hereof, for the purposes hereinbefore specified. Honour in arms, fair favour of your lady, and the king's thanks shall be your reward: and for the payment of such Brabançois, or other mercenaries as you can collect to serve under your banner in the said wars, not to exceed five hundred men, this letter shall be your warrant on the treasurer of our royal *domaines*, at the average hire and pay, mensual and diurnal, given by us during the last war.— Given at our Court of Paris, this Wednesday the eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Heaven, to whom we commend thee in all love.

“THE KING.”

A radiant flush of joy broke over De Coucy's countenance as he read; but before his eye had reached the end of the letter, importunate memory raked up the forgotten bankruptcy of his means, and cast it in his teeth. The hand which held the letter before his eyes dropped to his side; and with the fingers of the other he wandered thoughtfully over his brow, while he considered and reconsidered every expedient for raising sums sufficient to furnish him worthily forth for the expedition to which he was called. In the mean while, the hermit sat beside him marking his every action with a glance that might perhaps have suited Diogenes, had not a certain pensive shake of the head, as he gazed on

the working of human passions in the noble form before him, showed a somewhat milder feeling than the cynic of the tub was ever touched withal.

“Oh, that foul creditor, Poverty!” muttered De Coucy. “He chains the mind and the heart, as well as the limbs; and pinions down great desires and noble actions to the dungeon-floor of this sordid world. Here, with a career of glory before me that might lead to riches, to fame, to love! I have not a besant to equip my train; all tattered from the wars in Palestine. As for the Brabançois, too, that the king bids me bring, they must ever have some money to equip before they are fit for service. He should have known *that*, at least; but he forgot he wrote to a beggar, who could not advance a crown were it to save his nearest from starvation!”

“You are vexed, my son,” said the hermit, “and speak aloud, though you know it not. What is it movés thee thus!”

“I am moved, good hermit,” replied the knight sadly, “that now—at the very moment when ~~all~~ the dearest hopes of my heart call on me to push forward to the highest goal of honour, and when the way is clear before me—that the emptiness of my purse—the perfect beggary of my fortunes, casts a bar in my way that I cannot overleap. Read that letter, and then know, that instead of a baron’s train, I can but bring ten mounted men to serve Prince Arthur; nor are these armed or equipped so that I can look on them without shame. My lodging must be in the field, my food gathered from the earth, till the day of battle, nor dare I join the prince till then; for the expenses of the city suit not those whose purses are so famished as mine.”

“Nay, my son,” replied the hermit calmly, “think better of thy fortunes. To win much, one must often lose somewhat: and by a small expense, though you may not ruffle it among the proudest of the prince’s train, you may fit yourself to grace it decently, till such time as in the battle-field you can show how little akin

is courage to wealth. This may be surely done at a very small expense of gold."

"A small expense of gold!" exclaimed the young knight, impatiently. "I tell thee, good father, I have none! None—no, not a besant!"

"Nay, then," replied the hermit, "something you must sell, to produce more hereafter. That rare carbuncle in your thumb-ring will bring you doubtless gold enough to shine as brightly as the best."

"Nay," said De Coucy, "I part not with that. I would rather cut off the hand it hangs upon, and coin that into gold."

"Some woman's trinket," said the hermit with a frown; for men attached to the church, by whatever ties, were not very favourable to the idolatrous devotion of that age to the fairer sex—a devotion which they might think somewhat trespassed upon their rights. "Some woman's trinket, on my life!" said the hermit. "Thou wouldest guard no holy relic so, young man."

"Faith, hermit, you do me wrong," replied De Coucy, without flinching. "Though my love to my lady be next to my duty to my God, yet this is not, as you say, a woman's trinket. 'Twas the gift of a good and noble knight, the Count de Tankerville, to me, then young and going to the Holy Land, put on my finger with many a wise and noble counsel, by which I have striven to guide me since. Death, as thou hast heard, good hermit, has since placed his cold bar between us; but I would not part with this for worlds of ore. I am like the wild Arab of the desert," he added, with a smile, "in this sort somewhat superstitious; and I hold this ring, together with the memory of the good man who gave it, as a sort of talisman to guard me from evil spirits."

"Well! if thou wilt not part with it, I cannot help thee," replied the hermit. "Yet I know a certain jeweller would give huge sums of silver for such a stone as that."

"It cannot be!" answered De Coucy. "But now thou mind'st me; I have a bright smaragd, that, in my

young days of careless prosperity, I bought of a rich Jew at Ascalon. If it were worth the value that he gave it, 'twere now a fortune to me.—I pray thee, gentle hermit, take it with thee to the city. Give it to the jeweller thou speakest of; and bid him, as an honest and true man, send me with all speed what sum he may."

The hermit undertook the charge; and De Coucy instantly sent his page to the chamber, where he had left the emerald, which, being brought down he committed to the hands of the old man, praying him to make no delay. The hermit, however, still seemed to hanker after the large carbuncle on De Coucy's hand (which was also, be it remarked, engraved with his signet), and it was not till the young knight had once and again repeated his refusal, that he rose to depart.

De Coucy conducted him to the outer gate, followed by his page, who, when the old man had given his blessing, and begun to descend the hill, shook his head with a meaning look, exclaiming, "Ah, beau sire! he has got the emerald; and I fear you will never hear more of it; but he has not got the carbuncle, which was what he wanted. When first he saw you, at the time you were hurt in Auvergne, he looked at nothing but that; and would have had it off your hand too, if Hugo and I had not kept our eyes on him all the while."

"Nonsense, nonsense, boy!" cried De Coucy; "send me the new servant of arms Jodelle!"

The Coterel was not long in obeying the summons. "You told me," said De Coucy as he approached, "not many days ago, that you had once been followed by a band of two hundred Brabançois, who were now, you heard, roaming about, seeking service with some baron or suzerain who would give them employment. Have you any means of communicating with them should you wish it?"

"Why, you know, beau sire," replied Jodelle, "and there is no use of denying it, that we are oftentimes obliged to separate when the wars are over, and go hither and thither to seek food as we best may; but we take good care not to do so without leaving some chance

of our meeting again, when we desire it. The ways we manage that are part of our mystery, which I am in no manner bound to divulge ; but I doubt not I could soon discover, at least, where my ancient companions are."

"I seek none of your secrets, Sir Brabançois," said De Coucy. "If you can find your companions, do ; and tell them for me, that the king calls upon me to aid the Prince Arthur Plantagenet against bad John of Anjou, giving me commission, at the same time, to raise a body of five hundred free spears, to serve under my leading ; for whose pay, at the rate of the last war, Philip makes himself responsible. If your companions will take service with me, therefore, they may ; but each man must have served before, must be well trained to arms, disciplined, and obedient ; for De Coucy is no marauder, to pass over military faults, because ye be free companions."

The Côterel readily undertook a task that chimed so well with what he already purposed ; bounding his promises, however, to endeavours ; and striving to wring from De Coucy some offer of present supply to equip his troop, whom he well knew to be in a very indifferent condition, as far as arms and habiliments went.

Finding this to be out of the young knight's power, he left him, and proceeded, as rapidly as possible, to seek out the hiding-place of the wild band with whom we have already seen him in contact. His further motions for the next two days were not of sufficient interest to be here put down ; but on the third morning he presented himself at the young knight's chamber-door, as he was rising, bringing him news that he had discovered his band, and that they willingly agreed to follow so renowned a knight. He added, moreover, that at midday precisely, they would present themselves for *monstre*, as it was called, or review, in the great carrefour of the forest. In the mean time, he swore faith, true service, and obedience to the young knight in their name, for so long as the war should last.

The time of De Coucy and his followers had been

employed in polishing and preparing all the old arms, offensive and defensive, that the castle contained ; and of the former, indeed, no small quantity had been collected ; so that in the great hall lay many a sheaf of arrows and a pile of spears, with swords, daggers, maces, and bows not a few ; some scores of battle-axes and partisans, together with various anomalous weapons, such as bills, hooks, long knives, iron stars, and cutting pikes. But of defensive armour the supply was wofully small.

At the appointed hour of midday, the knight, followed by his squire and servants, now armed more completely than on their return from Palestine, proceeded to the great carrefour of the forest, where, as they approached, they beheld the body of Brabançois already arrived on the ground, and drawn up in so regular and soldier-like a manner, that even the experienced eye of De Coucy was deceived at first, and he fancied them as well-armed a body of cavalry as ever he had seen.

When he came into the centre of the carrefour, however, a very different sight struck his eye ; and he could not help striking his gauntleted hand upon his thigh till the armour rang again, with pure mortification at seeing the hopeless state of rust and raggedness of his new recruits.

Nor was this all : not two of the party presented the same appearance. One was in a steel corslet,—another in a haubert,—another had neither one nor the other. Some had brassards,—some had cuissards,—some had splints,—some had none at all. In short, it seemed as if they had murdered half a dozen men-at-arms, and divided their armour between two hundred ; so that when De Coucy thought of presenting himself, thus followed, at the court of Philip Augustus, he was first like to give himself up to despair, and then burst into a loud fit of laughter.

A very slight circumstance, however, changed the face of affairs. As he stood gazing on his ragged troop, with a half-rueful, half-laughing countenance, an ass, apparently loaded with sand, and a man driving it, y^ere

seen slowly approaching, as if intending to proceed to the castle.

"By the Lord!" cried the young knight, "this is a godsend—for, on my word, we shall want sand enough to scrub our armour. What hast thou there, good man?" he added, as the ass and his driver came near.

"Sand for the Châtelain de Coucy," replied the man. "Be you he?"

"Yes," answered the knight. "Sand for me!—What mean you, good friend? You must mistake."

"Not so, beau sire!" replied the driver, approaching and speaking low; "'tis a thousand marks of silver!"

"Ha!—From whom?"

"The price of a ring," replied the man, "sent by the holy Bernard of St. Mandé by me, his humble penitent, to the Sire de Coucy."

"That alters the matter!" cried the knight,—"that alters the matter! Take thy sand to the castle, good friend.—Hugo, ride with all speed to Vernon. Bring me all the armourers of the town, with all the arms they have ready. Send a serf to Gisors on the same errand.—A thousand marks of silver!—By the Lord that lives! I will equip an army!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE night was dark and gloomy. A thousand black clouds were flitting over the sky, borne by a quick rough breeze, which ever and anon, with wild caprice, would scatter them abroad, leaving the yellow moonlight to shine bright upon their white edges, and pour a flood of mellow radiance on the world below; and then again would whirl some deep shadowy mass up from the profound verge of the horizon, and once more overwhelm all in gloom and obscurity.

Amid such occasional glimpses of moonlight, strug-

gled on from the village of Vincennes, through the great forest of St. Mandé, a stout, short man, wrapped in an immense cloak, and preceded by a boy holding a torch, which the high wind threatened every moment to extinguish.

“Art thou sure thou knowest the way, urchin?” cried the man, in a wearied and panting tone, which argued plainly enough that his corpulency loved not deeply the species of stumbling locomotion to which his legs subjected his paunch, amid the roots and stones of the forest path.—“Art thou sure that thou knowest the road?—Jesu preserve me! I would not lose my way here to be called to the conclave!”

“Oh, I know the way well!” replied the boy, in a shrill treble. “I come here every day, to ask the prayers of the holy hermit for my grandmother, who is ninety years of age, and sick of a hydropsy.”

“Better pray God to take her, rather than to leave her!” replied his companion. “ ‘Tis a foolish errand mine,—’tis a foolish errand!” he continued, speaking peevishly to himself, as he struggled to shake off a pertinacious branch of withered thorn which, detached from its parent bush, clung fondly to the tail of his robe, and trailed solemnly on behind him. “Not the errand itself, which is holy, just, and expedient; but the coming at night.—Take care, urchin! The wind will blow it out, if you flaunt it after such a fashion.—The coming at night!—Yet what could I do? The canon of St. Berthe’s said true—that if I came in the day, folks would say I could not govern my diocese myself.—I told you so, foolish child! I told you so!—Now, what are we to do?” continued he, raising his voice to the very highest pitch of dismay and crossness, as a sharp gust of wind up one of the long glades extinguished completely the flame of the torch, which had for some time been wavering with a very undecided sort of flicker:—“now, what are we to do?”

“Oh, I know the way, as well without the light as with,” replied the same childish voice: “I’ll lead you right, beau sire.”

"Ay, ay, child," said the other, "but I love not forests in the dark :—this one has a bad name too—'tis said more sorts of evil spirits than one haunt it. The Lord be merciful unto us ! The Devil is powerful in these hours of darkness ! And besides, there are other dangers.—" Here he stumbled over one of the large roots of an elm, shot across the path, and would doubtless have fallen at full length had not his little guide's shoulder come opportunely in the way of his hand, as it sprawled forth in the act of descent, and thus afforded him some stay !—"Cursed be the root !" cried he ;—"cursed be it, above the earth, and under the earth !—cursed be it in this life, and to all eternity ! Amen.—Lord have mercy upon me ! Sinner that I am ! I am repeating the anathema. It will never go out of my head, that anathema—cursed be it !—Boy, is it far off still ?—Did not you hear a noise ?" he added suddenly.

"I hear the rustling of the wind," replied the child, "but nothing more. You folks that do not live near the forests do not know what sounds it makes sometimes."

"Evil spirits, boy !—evil spirits !" cried the man. "Evil spirits, I tell thee, screaming in their malice ; but I vow I hear ~~a~~ rushing, as if there were some wild beasts.—Hark ! hark !" and he grasped the boy's arm, looking round and round in the darkness, which his fancy filled with all the wild creation of fear.

"Ne in furore tuo arguas me, Domine, neque in ira tua corripias me. Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum !" cried the frightened traveller ; when suddenly the clouds rolled white away from the face of the moon, and her beams for a moment streaming down clear upon them, showed the wide open glade of the wood, untenanted by any one but themselves, with the old ruined tomb in the forest, and the rude hut of Bernard the Hermit. "Kyrie eleison ! Christe eleison !" cried the traveller, at the sight of these blessed rays ; and running forward to reach the dwelling of the hermit before the clouds again brought darkness over

the face of the earth, he arrived, all breathless and panting, and struck hard with his fist against the closed door. "Open, open ! Brother Bernard ! and let me in," he cried loudly. "Let me in, before the moon goes behind the cloud again."

"Who art thou, who breakest through my prayers ?" cried the voice of the hermit. "And why fearest thou the going of the moon ? Thou wilt not be one jot wiser when she is gone."

"Nay ! 'tis I, Brother Bernard," replied the traveller, fretting with impatience to get in. "'Tis I, I tell thee, man ! Thy friend and fellow-labourer in this poor vineyard of France !"

"I have no friend but the Lord and his holy saints," said the hermit, opening the door.—"But how is this, Lord Bishop ?"

"Hush ! hush !" cried the other, holding up his hand. "Do not let the boy hear thee !—I come in secret, upon matters of deep import."

"Does not the text say, '*That which thou doest in secret shall be proclaimed openly?*'" demanded the hermit.—"But what dost thou mean to do with the boy ?" continued he, laying his hand on the child's head. "If he be as terrified as thou seemest to be, he will not love to stay till thine errand with me is done."

"Oh, I fear not, father," said the youth. "I am forest-bred ; and nothing evil would come within sight of thy dwelling."

"Well, poor lad !" said the hermit. "Sit there by the door ; and if aught scares thee, push it open, and come in."

The boy accordingly seated himself by the door, which was shut upon him ; and the hermit pointed a place on his bed of straw and moss, for the bishop's seat. If it had any distinction, 'twas solely that of being situated beneath the crucifix, under which a small lamp was burning, giving the only light which the cell possessed.

The good prelate—for such he was—cast himself upon the moss, and stretching forth his hands on his

broad fat knees, employed no inconsiderable space of time in cooling himself, and recovering his breath, after the bodily fear and exertion he had undergone. The hermit seated himself also ; and waited, in grave silence, the communication, whatever it was, that brought so respectable a dignitary of the church as the Bishop of Paris to his cell at so unsuitable an hour.

“ The Lord be merciful unto me !” cried the bishop, after a long pause. “ What perils and dangers have I not run this very night for the service of the church and the poor Christian souls of the French people, who are now crying for the rites and ceremonies of the church, as the tribes of Israel cried for flesh in the desert.”

“ But i report speaks right,” replied the hermit, “ thy flock has no need to cry ; as the interdict has not yet been enforced within thy diocese, Father Bishop.”

“ True ! unhappily too true !” cried the prelate, imagining that the hermit imputed blame to him for the delay. “ But what could I do, Brother Bernard ? God knows—praised be his name !—that I have the most holy and devout fear of the authority of the blessed church of Rome ;—but how can I bear to tear the food of salvation from the mouths of the poor hungry people ?—Besides, when I did but mention it to the king, he cried out in his rude and furious way :—‘ By the joyeuse of St. Charlemagne ! bishop, take care what you do ! As long as you eat of the fat, and drink of the strong, you prelates of France mind nothing ; but let me hear no more of this interdict, or I will smite you hip and thigh ! I will drive you forth from your benefices ! I will deprive you of your feoffs, and I will strip you of your wealth !—and then you may get rosy wines and rich meats where you can !’ ”

A sort of cynical smile gathered round the hermit’s lip, as if in his heart he thought Philip’s estimate of the clergy of his day was not a bad one : and indeed their scandalous luxury was but too fertile a theme of

censure to all the severer moralists of those times. He contented himself, however, with demanding what the prelate intended to do.

“Nay, on that subject I came to consult you, Brother Bernard,” replied the bishop. “You have ever shown yourself a wise and prudent man, since you came into this place, some seven years ago; and all you have recommended has prospered.—Now, in truth, I know not what to do. The king is furious. His love for this Agnes—(If God would but please to take her to himself, what a blessing!)—is growing more and more. He has already cast out half the bishops of France for enforcing the interdict, and seized on the lands of many of the barons who have permitted or encouraged it.—What can I do? If I enforce it, he will cast me out too; and the people will be no better. If I do not enforce it, I fall under the heavy censure of our holy father the pope!”

“You know your duty, Father Bishop, far better than I can tell it to you,” replied the hermit, with what might almost be called a malicious determination to give no assistance whatever to the poor prelate, who, between his fears of Rome and his dread of losing his diocese, laboured like a ship in a stormy sea. “Your duty must be done.”

“But hearken, Brother Bernard,” said the bishop, “You know John of Arville, the canon of St. Berthe’s—a keen, keen man, though he be so quiet and calm, and one that knows every thing which passes in the world, though he be so devout and strict in his religious exercises.”

“I know him well,” said the hermit sternly, as if the qualities of the worthy canon stood not high in his esteem,—“What of him?”

“Why, you know that now William of Albert is dead, this John is head of the canons of St. Berthe,” replied the bishop. “Now, you must know still farther, that a few days ago, the young Count d’Auvergne, with his train, came to Paris and was hospitably received by the canons of St. Berthe, in whose church

his father had been a great founder. As the interdict is strictly kept in his own part of the country, the count could not confess himself there ; but, wisely and religiously, seeing that years might elapse before he could again receive the comforts of the church if the interdict lasted, and not knowing what might happen in the mean time—for life is frail, you know, Brother Bernard—he resolved to confess himself to John of Arville, the canon ; which he did. So, then, you see, John of Arville came away to me, and told me, that he had a great secret which might heal all the wounds of the state."

"How!" exclaimed the hermit, starting up. "Did he betray the secrets of confession?"

"No, no! You mistake, Brother Bernard," cried the bishop peevishly. "No, no! He did not betray the secrets of confession; but in his conversations afterward with the young count, he drew from him that he loved this Agnes de Meranie, and that she had been promised to him by her brother as he went to the Holy Land: and that her brother being killed there, and her father knowing nothing of the promise, gave her to the King Philip. But now, hearing that the marriage is not lawful, he—her father, the Duke of Istria—has charged this young Count d'Auvergne, as a knight, and one who was her dead brother's dear friend, secretly to command her, in his name, to quit the court of France, and return to his protection: and the count has thereon staked life and fortune, that if she will consent, he will find means to bring her back to Istria, in despite of the whole world. This is what he communicated to the reverend canon, not, as you say, in confession, but in sundry conversations after confessions."

Bernard the Hermit gave no thought to what, in our eyes, may appear a strange commission for a parent like the Duke of Istria to confide to so young a man as the Count d'Auvergne. But in those days, we must remember, such things were nothing strange; for knightly honour had as yet been so rarely violated that, to doubt it for an instant, under such a mark of con-

fidence, would have been then considered as a proof of a base and dishonourable heart. The hermit's mind, therefore, turned alone to the conduct of the priest..

"I understand," replied he, drawing his brows together, even more sternly than he had heretofore done. "The reverend Canon of St. Berthe's claims kindred in an equal degree with the fox and the wolf. He has taken care that the count's secrets, first communicated to him *in confession*, should be afterward repeated to him without such a seal. Thinks he, I wonder, to juggle Heaven, as well as man, with the letter instead of the spirit? And doubtless, now, he would gladly give the Count d'Auvergne all easy access to persuade this unhappy girl to return; so that he, the Canon of St. Berthe's, may but save his diocesan from the unwieldy burden of the interdict, at the expense of a civil war between the powerful Count d'Auvergne and his liege lord Philip. 'Tis a goodly scheme, good Father Bishop; but 'twill not succeed. Agnes loves Philip—looks on him as her husband—refuses to part from him—has the spirit of a hero in a woman's bosom, and may as soon be moved by such futile plans, as the north star by the singing of the nightingale."

"See what it is to be a wise man!" said the bishop, unable to restrain a little triumphant chuckle, at having got the hermit at fault.—"See what it is to be a wise man, and not hear a simple story out! Besides, good Brother Bernard, you speak but uncharitably of the reverend Canon of St. Berthe's, who is a holy and religious man; though, like you yourself, somewhat too proud of worldly wisdom—a-hem!"

"A-hem!" echoed something near; at least, so it seemed to the quick and timorous ears of the worthy prelate, who started up and listened. "Did you not hear something, Brother Bernard?" demanded he in a low voice. "Did you not hear a noise? Cursed be it upon the earth! and—God forgive me!"

"I heard the roaring of the wind, and the creaking of the wood, but nothing else," replied the hermit,

calmly. "But what wert thou about to say, Father Bishop ! If I have taken thee up wrongly, I am ready to acknowledge my folly. All men are but as fools; and I not among the least. If I have wronged the Canon of St. Berthe's, I am ready to acknowledge the fault: All men are sinners, and I not among the least. But how have I been mistaken at present ?"

"Why, altogether!" replied the prelate, after having reassured himself by listening several moments without hearing any farther sound,—"altogether, Brother Bernard. The Canon of St. Berthe's aims at nothing you have mentioned. No one knows better than he the queen's mind, as he is her confessor; and he sees well; that till the king shows some sign of willingness to part with her, she will remain fixed to him; as if she were part of himself; but he knows, too, that if Philip does but evince the least coldness—the least slackening of the bonds that bind him to her, she will think he wearis of his constancy, or fears the consequences of his opposition to the holy church; and will herself demand to quit him. His scheme therefore is, to let the king grow jealous of the Count d'Anvergne to such a point as to show some chilliness to the queen. Agnes herself will think that he repents of his opposition to our blessed father the pope; and will propose to depart. Philip's jealousy will prevent him from saying nay; and the reverend canon himself, as her confessor, will conduct her with a sufficient escort to the court of Istria: where, please God ! he may be rewarded as he deserves; for the signal service he renders France!"

"Hoo ! hoo ! hoo !" cried a voice from without; which sounded through the unglazed window, as if it was in the very hut.

"Miserere mei, Domine, secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum !" exclaimed the bishop; the rosy hue of his cheek, which had returned, in the security of the hermit's cell, to much the colour of the field pimpernel, now fading away to the hue of the same flower in an ancient herbal.

"'Tis but an owl !—'tis but an owl !" cried the her-

mit ; and, fixing his eyes on the ground, he meditated deeply for several minutes, regardless of the still unsubdued terror of the bishop, who, drawing a chaplet from beneath his robe, filled up the pause with *paters* and *aves*, strangely mixed with various very ungodly curses from the never-forgotten anathema, which in his fright, like prisoners in a popular tumult, rushed forth against his will, the moment fear unbarred the door of his lips.

“It is a cruel scheme !” said the hermit at length, “and the man who framed it is a cruel man ; who, for his own base ambition of gaining bishoprics in Germany and credit at Rome, scruples not to tear asunder the dearest ties of the heart—but for you or me, Father Bishop,” he added, turning more immediately to the prelate, “for you and me, who have no other interest in this thing than the general welfare of our country, to prevent civil war and general rebellion of the king’s vassals, which will inevitably ensue if the interdict lasts, especially while he bears so hard a hand upon them,—for us, I say, it is to consider whether by the sorrow inflicted in this instance, infinite, infinite misery may not be spared through the whole nation. If you come then, Father Bishop, to ask me my opinion, I think the scheme which this Canon of St. Berthe’s proposed may be made use of—as an evil indeed—but as the least, infinitely the least, of two great ones. I think, then, that it may conscientiously be made use of ; but, at the same time, I think the worse of the man that framed it—ay ! and he knew I should think the worse of him !”

“Why, indeed, and in truth, I believe he did,” answered the bishop, who had somewhat recovered his composure by the non-repetition of the sounds.—“I believe he did, for he mightily opposed my consulting you on the matter ; saying that—though all the world knows, Brother Bernard, you are a wise man, and a holy one too ; for, indeed, none but a holy man dare inhabit such a wild place, amid all sorts of evil spirits—cursed be they above the earth and under the earth !—but saying—as I was going to observe—that if I were

seen coming here, people would think I knew not how to govern my own diocese ; but must needs have your help. So I came here at night, God forgive me and protect me ! for, if ever the sin of pride and false shame was punished, and repented of with fear and trembling, it has been this night."

So frank a confession changed the cynical smile that was gathering round the anchorite's lips, into one of a blander character. "Your coming in the day, good Father Bishop," replied he, "would have honoured me, without disgracing you. The world would but have said, that the holy Bishop of Paris visited the poor Hermit of Vincennes, to consult with him for the people's good.—But let us to the question. If you will follow my counsel, good father, you will lay this scheme before that honoured and noble knight, and reverend bishop, Guerin ; for, believe me, it will be necessary to keep a careful guard over Philip ; and to watch him well, lest, his passions being raised to a dangerous degree, it become necessary to tell him suddenly the whole truth. I am absent from him. You are busied with the cares of your flock ; and the Canon of St. Berthe's *must not* be trusted. But Guerin is always near him ; and, with your holy zeal and his prudent watching, this scheme, though it may tear the heart of the king and of the fair, unfortunate girl, Agnes his wife, may also save bloodshed, rebellion, and civil war, and raise the interdict from this ill-fated kingdom."

A loud scream, like that of some ravenous bird, but prolonged so that it seemed as if no mortal breath could have given it utterance, thrilled through the air as the hermit spoke, and vibrated round and round the hut. The bishop sank on his knees, and his little guide pushed open the door and ran in. "I dare stay out there no longer !" cried the boy : "there is something in the tree !—there is something in the tree !"

"Where ?" cried the hermit, striding towards the door, his worn and emaciated figure erecting itself, and seeming to swell out with new-born energy. "Where is this sight ? Were it the Prince of Evil himself, I

defy him!"—and with a firm step, he advanced into the moonlight, between the threshold of the hut and the ancient tomb, casting his eyes up into the shattered oak, whose remaining branches stretched wide and strong over the path.

To his surprise, however, he beheld seated on one of the large boughs, in the attitude of an ape, a dark figure, like that of a man; who no sooner cast his eyes on the hermit, than he began to pour forth more strange and detestable sounds than ever were uttered by a human tongue, moving backwards along the branches at the same time with superhuman agility.

"Avoid thee, Satan! In the name of Jesus thy conqueror! avoid thee!" cried the hermit, holding up the crucifix attached to his rosary.

"Haw, haw! oh rare! The interdict, the interdict!" shouted the vision, gliding along among the branches. "Oh rare! oh rare!" And then burst forth a wild scream of unnatural laughter, which for a moment rang round and round, as if echoed by a thousand voices; then died away fainter and fainter, and at last was lost entirely; while the dark figure from which it seemed to proceed disappeared amid the gloom of the thick boughs and leaves.

"Rise, rise, Father Bishop!" cried the hermit, entering the hut. "The fiend is gone; and verily his coming, where he has never dared to come before, seemed to show that he is fearful of your design, and would fain scare us from endeavouring to raise the interdict:—rise, good father, I say, and be not frightened from your endeavour!" So saying, the hermit stooped and aided his reverend visiter; whom at his return he had found stretched flat on his face, at the foot of the cross, before which the anchorite's lamp was burning.

"Now, Jesus preserve us! this is very dreadful, Brother Bernard!" cried the poor bishop, his teeth chattering in his head. "How you can endure it, and go on living here, exposed to such attacks, I know not; but I do know that one week of such residence would wear all the flesh off my bones."

The hermit glanced his eye, with somewhat of a cold smile, from the round, well-covered limbs of the prelate, to his own meager and sinewy form. He made not, however, the comment that sprang to his lips, but simply replied, "I am not often subject to such visitations, and, as you see, the enemy flies from me when I appear."

"But, for all that," answered the bishop, "I tell thee, good Brother Bernard, I dare as much go home through that forest alone with this urchin, as I dare jump off the tower of the Louvre!"

"Fear not: I will go with thee," replied the anchorite. "The boy, too, has a torch, I see. The night is now clear, and the wind somewhat gone down, so that the way will be soon trodden."

Company of any kind, under such circumstances, would have been received as a blessing by the good bishop; but that of so holy a man as the hermit was reputed to be was doubly a security. Clinging to him, therefore, somewhat closer than bespoke much valour, the prelate suffered himself to be led out into the forest; while the boy, with his torch now lighted again, accompanied them, a little indeed in advance, but not sufficiently so as to prevent him also from holding tight by the anchorite's frock.

Thus, then, they proceeded through the winding paths of the wood, now in light, and now in shade, till the dark roofs of the village near Vincennes, sleeping quietly in the moonshine, met once more the delighted eyes of the Bishop of Paris. Here the anchorite bade God speed him, and, turning his steps back again, took the way to his hut.

Did we say that the hermit, Bernard, did not, every now and then, give a glance to the wood on either side as he passed, or that he did not hold his crucifix in his hand, and, from time to time, murmur a prayer to Heaven or his guardian angel, we should say what was false; but still he walked on with a firm step, and a far more erect carriage than usual, prepared to encounter the enemy of mankind, should he appear in bodily

shape, with all the courage of a Christian and the zeal of an enthusiast.

When he had reached his hut, however, and fastened the door, he cast himself on his knees before the cross, and, folding his arms devoutly on his bosom, he exclaimed,—“O blessed Saviour! pardon if I have sinned in the counsel I have this night given. Let not weakness of understanding be attributed to me for wickedness of heart; but, as thou seest that my whole desire is to serve Thee, and do good unto my fellow-christians, grant, O Lord! pardon and remittance unto the faults of my judgment! Nevertheless, if my counsel be evil, and thou hast permitted thy conquered enemy to show himself unto me visibly, as a sign of thy wrath, let me beseech thee, Lord! to turn that counsel aside that it have no effect, and that the sorrow of my brethren lay not heavy on my head!”

To this extempore prayer the good hermit added one or two from the regular ritual of the church; and then, casting himself on his bed of moss, with a calmed mind he fell into a profound sleep.

In the mean while, day broke upon the glades of the forest; and, at about the distance of a mile from the dwelling of the hermit, dropped down from one of the old oaks, with the first ray of the sun, no less a person than our friend Gallon the Fool.

“Haw, haw!” cried he, “Haw, haw, haw! My lord ordered me to be shut out, if I came not home by dusk; and now, by my shutting out, I have heard a secret he would give his ears to hear.—Haw, haw! Haw, haw! —I’ve ninety-nine minds not to tell him—but it wants the hundredth. So I will tell him.—Then he’ll break their plot, or give news of it to the king and the Auvergne;—and then, they’ll all be hanged up like acorns,—Haw, haw! and we shall keep the sweet interdict—the dear interdict—the beloved interdict.—I saw five dead men lying unburied in the convent field.—Haw, haw, haw! Haw, haw! I love the interdict—I do! ‘Tis like my nose. It mars the face of the country, which otherwise were a fair face.—Haw, haw! I love

interdicts. My nose is my interdict.—Haw, haw, haw! But I must find other means to spite the De Coucy, for shutting me out! I spited him finely, by sending down the old fool Julian into the glade, where he was cajoling his daughter!—Haw, haw, haw! Haw, haw!” So saying, he bounded forward, and ran as hard as he could towards the distant city.

CHAPTER XXI.

LET us suppose a brief lapse of time and a slight change of scene. 'Twas the month of September; and though the mellow hand of autumn had already spread a rich golden tinge over field and wood, yet not a particle of summer's sparkling brilliancy seemed gone from the clear blue sky. 'Twas in the bright land, too, of merry Touraine, where migratory summer seems to linger longer than any where else; and though the sickle had done its work, and the brown plains told that the year's prime was past, yet there was a smile on the aspect of the land, as if it would fain have promised that the sweet days of the earth's life would be there immortal.

Over one of the wide open fields of that country, swelling gently with a soft undulating slope, and bordered, here and there, with low scattered woods, were seen to ride a gay party of horsemen, but few in number indeed, but with their arms glittering in the morning sun, their plumes waving in the breeze, and, in short, with “all the pomp and circumstance of war.”

In faith, it was as fair a sight to see as the world can give—a party of the chivalry of that age. For them were all the richest habiliments reserved by law. Robes of scarlet, ornaments of gold, fine furs, and finer stuffs, were all theirs by right; and with their banners, and pennons, and their polished armour, their embroi-

dered coats-of-arms, and their decorated horses, they formed a moving mass of animated splendour, such as the present day cannot afford to show.

The group we speak of at present wanted nothing that cavalry could display. At its head rode a fair youth, just in man's opening day ; his eye sparkling, his cheek glowing, his lip smiling with the bursting happiness of his heart, at finding himself freed from restraint. Lord of himself, and entering on the brilliant career of arms, supported by knights, by nobles, and by kings, to strive for—not the ordinary stake of ordinary men—but for crowns, and thrones, and kingdoms.

Arthur Plantagenet wore his helmet still ; as if the new weight of honourable armour was more a delight than a burthen to him ; but the visor being open, his face was clearly exposed, and spoke nothing but hope and animation. His arms were all inlaid with gold, and over his shoulders he wore the superb surcoat of arms which had been worked for him by the fair hands of Agnes de Meranie.

On the prince's right-hand rode Guy de Coucy, with his head still unarmed ; and merely covered by a green velvet bonnet with a jewel and a plume of the feathers of the white egret, which had been bestowed upon him by the king on his joining the expedition at Paris. Neither did he ride his battle-horse—which, as when we first saw him, was led behind him by a squire—but was mounted on one of the Arabian coursers which he had brought with him from the Holy Land. He had, however, his tremendous long sword by his side, the tip descending to his heel, and the hilt coming up nearly to his shoulder ; and, though at the bow of his war-saddle, on the other horse, hung his heavy battle-axe and mace, a lighter axe swung by his side. His gauntlets were on, his squires were close behind him ; and by various other signs of the same kind, it might be inferred that the road he was now travelling was more likely to be hostilely interrupted, than that over which he had passed in Auvergne.

On Arthur's left hand appeared in complete arms the

famous warrior and troubadour, whose songs and whose deeds have descended honourably even to our days,— Savary de Mauléon. As in the case of De Coucy, his casque was borne behind him; but, in other respects, he was armed *cap à pied*.

Of this knight one thing must be remarked, which, though it might seem strange, was no less true, and showed the madness of that age for song. Between himself and the squires who bore his casque and led his battle-horse rode a tiny beautiful boy, mounted on a small fleet Limousin jennet, and habited with all the extravagant finery which could be devised. In his hand, instead of shield, or lance, or implement of bloody warfare, he bore a small sort of harp, exactly of the shape of those with which the sculptors of that period have represented King David, as well as sundry angels, in the rich tympanums of many of the gothic church-doorways in France. This instrument, however, was not fully displayed on the journey, being covered with a *housse*, or veil of silver gauze, from which, such coverings often being applied to shields of arms, any one passing by might have mistaken it for some buckler of a new and strange form.

Behind this first group, who were followed immediately by their squires, came at a little distance a ~~confused~~ body of knights of lesser fame; in general, vassals of Savary de Mauléon, or of his friends; or others who, from disgust towards King John, had come over to the increasing party of his nephew. These were all well armed and equipped; and, though riding for the time in a scattered and irregular manner, it wanted but a word from their chiefs to bring them into line, or hedge, as it was called, when, with their long lances, heavy-armed horses, and impenetrable persons, they would have offered a formidable barrier against any attack.

A group of servants-of-arms followed these knights; and behind these again, with far more show of discipline, and covered with bright new armour, came two hundred Brabançois, with their old captain, Jodelle, at their

head. Their horses were unarmed, except by an iron poitral, to resist the blow of a lance or sword on the first assault. The riders also were but lightly harnessed, with cuirass, steel cap, and buckler; but being intended principally to act either as horse-archers themselves, or against bodies of foot, they often proved the most serviceable troops in the army.

At the head of their line rode Hugo de Barre, bearing De Coucy's banner; while, armed something like a Brabançois, but more heavily, with the place of his favourite mare supplied by a strong black horse, Gallon the Fool rode along the ranks, keeping the greater part of the soldiers in continual merriment. There were, it is true, some ten or twelve of them who knit their brows from under their iron caps at the jongleur as he passed; but the generality of the Brabançois laughed at his jest, or gave it him back again; and, indeed, no one seemed more amused, or in better harmony with the mad juggler, than the captain Jodelle himself.

The whole party might consist of about five hundred men; and they moved on slowly, as if not very certain whether they might not be near some unseen enemy. The plain on which we have said they were, was unbroken by any thing in the shape of a hedge, and sufficiently flat to give a view over its whole surface; but, at the same time, the low woods that bordered it here and there might have concealed many thousand men, and the very evenness of the country prevented any view of what was beyond.

"Straight before you, beau sire!" said Savary de Mauléon, pointing forward with his hand,—"at the distance of three hours' march, lies the famous city of Tours; and even now, if you look beyond that wood, you will catch a faint glance of the church of the blessed St. Martin. See you not a dark gray mass against the sky, squarer and more stiff in form than any of the trees?"

"I do, I do!—And is that Tours?" cried Arthur, each fresh object wakening in his heart that unaccountable delight with which youth thrills towards novelty,

—that dear brightness of the mind, which, in our young days, reflects all things presented to it with a thousand splendid dazzling rays not their own; but, alas! which too soon gets dimmed and dull in the vile chafing and rubbing of the world. “Is that Tours?” and his fancy instantly conjured up, and combined with the image of the distant city, a bright whirl of vague and pleasant expectations which, like a child’s top, kept dizzily spinning before his eyes, based on an invisible point, and ready to fall on a touch.

“That is Tours, beau sire,” replied the knight; “and I doubt not that there, what with all my fair countrymen of Anjou and Poitou, who have already promised their presence, and others who may have come without their promise, you will find knights enough for you to undertake at once some bold enterprise.”

Arthur looked to De Coucy, under whose tutelage as a warrior Philip Augustus had in some degree placed the inexperienced prince. “Far be it from me,” said the knight, “to oppose any bold measure that has the probability of success along with it; but, as a general principle, I think that in a war which is likely to be of long duration, when we expect the speedy arrival of strong reinforcements, and where nothing is to be lost by some delay, it is wise to pause, so as to strike the first strokes with certainty of success; especially where the prince’s person may be put in danger by any rash attempt.”

“By the blessed St. Martin!” cried Savary de Mauléon, “I thought not to hear the Sire de Coucy recommend timid delay. Fame has, as usual, belied him, when she spoke of his courage as somewhat rash.”

De Coucy had, indeed, spoken rather in opposition to the general character of his own mind; but he felt that there was a degree of responsibility attached to his situation, which required the greatest caution to guard against the natural daring of his disposition. He maintained, therefore, the same coolness in reply to the Poitevin knight, although it cost him some effort to

repress the same spirit manifesting itself in his language which glowed warm on his brow.

“Sir Guillaume Savary de Mauléon,” replied he, “in the present instance, my counsel to Prince Arthur shall be to attempt nothing till he has such forces as shall render those first attempts certain; and, as to myself, I can but say, that when you and I are in the battle-field, my banner shall go as far, at least, as yours into the midst of the enemies.”

“Not a step farther!” said Savary de Mauléon, quickly,—“not a step farther!”

“That shall be as God pleases,” answered De Coucy; “but, in the mean time, we are disputing about wind. Till we reach Tours we cannot at all tell what assistance may wait us there. If there be sufficient force to justify us in proceeding to action I will by no means dissent; but if there be but few of our friends arrived, I will say, that man who advises the prince to attempt any thing yet may be as brave as a lion, but seeks to serve his own vanity more than Arthur Plantagenet.”

“How his own vanity, sir?” demanded Savary de Mauléon, ready to take offence on the slightest provocation.

“By risking his prince’s fortunes,” replied De Coucy, “rather than let others have a share in the harvest of glory before him.—Ho, there!” he continued, turning to one of his squires, who instantly rode up.—“Bid Jodelle detach a score of his lightest men round the eastern limb of that wood, and bring me word what ‘tis that glittered but now above the trees. Go yourself, too, and use your eyes.”

The man obeyed with the promptitude of one accustomed to serve a quick and imperative lord; and the little manœuvre the knight had commanded was performed with all the precision he could desire. In the mean while he resumed the conversation with Arthur and Savary de Mauléon, who—cooled by the momentary pause, and also somewhat soothed by something flattering, he scarce knew what, in the idea of the sort of

avarice of glory De Coucy had attributed to him—replied to the young knight with more cordiality than he had at first evinced. In a very few minutes, the horsemen who had been detached returned at full gallop. Their report was somewhat startling. A large body of horse, they said, whose spearheads De Coucy had seen above the low trees, were skirting slowly round the wood towards them. Full a hundred knights, with barbed horses and party penons, had been seen. There appeared more behind; and the whole body, with the squires, archers, and servants-of-arms, might amount to fifteen hundred. No banner, however, was displayed; but one of the Brabançois declared, that he knew the foremost to be King John's Norman knights by the fashion of their hauberts and the pikes on their horses' heads.

“Give me my lance and casque!” cried De Coucy. —“Sir Savary de Mauléon, I leave the prince under your care, while I with my Brabançois and followers give these gentry the meeting at the corner of the wood. You would not be mad enough in this business to risk the prince with four hundred men and forty knights against one hundred knights and fifteen hundred men!”

“Surely not,” replied Savary de Mauléon; “but still I go with you myself, beau sire.”

“No! as you are a knight,” cried De Coucy, grasping his hand, “I charge you, stay with the prince, cover his march to Tours; keep all the knights with you, for you will want them all. You start fair with the enemy,—the distance is about equal to the city; and I promise you, that if they pass yon turn of the wood within this quarter of an hour, 'tis over my dead body,—let it be so, Sir Knight, in God's name! The honour will rest with him who gets the prince safe to Tours. Is not that enough? You have the post of honour.”

“And you the post of danger,” said Savary de Mauléon, shaking his head.

“Mind not you that!” cried De Coucy, whose casque was by this time fixed. “If these be Normans there will be danger and honour enough, too, before

you reach Tours ;" and grasping his lance, he fell back to the band of Brabançois, put himself at their head, and galloped at full speed to the turning of the wood.

Before coming in sight of the enemy, however, De Coucy paused, and advancing so far alone as to gain a sight of them, he perceived that their numbers, though they had been somewhat exaggerated, were still too great to admit the chance of fighting them with any hope of success. His object, therefore, was to delay them on their march as long as he could ; and then to retreat fighting, so as to cover the prince's march upon Tours. Accordingly he commanded the Cotereaux to spread out in such a manner that the iron of their spears might just be seen protruding from the wood, and by patting his horse's neck and touching him with the spur, he made him utter one or two loud neighs for the purpose of calling the attention of the enemy, which the sound of their galloping thither did not seem to have done.

The stratagem had its effect : the whole body of horse who were approaching, halted ; and after a few minutes' consultation a reconnoitring party was thrown out, who approached in front of De Coucy's party, and fell back again instantly on their main body. "Ground your spears !" cried De Coucy ; " unsling your bows ; have each man his arrow on the string, and the string to his ear, and give them such a flight as shall dizzy them whenever they come near."

The Brabançois obeyed : each man rested his spear, which, by-the-way, was distinguished in many respects from the knight's lance, threw his bridle over his arm, and drew his bowstring to his ear ; while De Coucy advanced a few paces to observe the motions of the enemy. To his surprise, however, he observed half a dozen knights ride out while the rest stood still ; and in a moment after displaying the banner of Hugues de Lusignan, they advanced at full speed, crying loudly, " Artus Anjou ! Artus Anjou !" — the rallying cry which the knights of Anjou attached to the party of Arthur had adopted.

“Hold! hold!” cried De Coucy, waving his hand to his archers. “Here must be some mistake. These are friends.” So, indeed, it proved; and, on a nearer approach, De Coucy found that the body of troops which had caused the alarm had in truth come forth from Tours, for the protection of Arthur, whom they had long known to be approaching with but a small force; while King John, with a considerable army, was reported to be ravaging the county of Maine. The cause of the mistake also was now explained. Some knights of Normandy, either moved by the justice of Arthur’s claims, or disgusted with the weak levity and eowardly baseness of John, had crossed the country; and, joining the troops of Hugues le Brun, and Godefroy de Lusignan, under the command of Ruual d’Issoudun, Count d’Eu, had come out to give the sovereign they had determined to acknowledge welcome and protection.

These communications were much sooner made than they are written; and De Coucy, whose banner had been seen and recognised by the reconnoitring party, was received by the assembled knights with no small marks of honour and esteem. His troops had of course now to make a retrograde motion, but no great haste was necessary to overtake the body he had before left; for Savary de Maulèon had taken such good care that his retreat should not appear like a flight, that the messenger De Coucy despatched to inform him of the change of aspect which affairs had undergone reached the small body of knights who had remained with Arthur before they had proceeded half a mile.

The meeting of the two bands was a joyous one on both sides, and nothing was now talked of among the knights of Anjou and Poitou but proceeding instantly to active and energetic operations against the enemy. De Coucy was silent, well knowing that a council must be held on the subject after their arrival at Tours; and reserving his opinion for that occasion, though he well saw that his single voice would be drowned amid the many, which were all eager to urge a course that, under any

other circumstances, he would have been the first to follow, but which, where the stake was a kingdom, and the hazard great, he did not feel himself justified in approving.

While things were thus proceeding in front of the army, the Brabançois, who now occupied a much less important station than when they formed, as it were, the main body of the prince's force, followed at some little distance in the rear. A few steps in advance of this troop rode Jodelle, particularly affecting to have no private communication with his men ; but, on the contrary, sometimes riding up to Hugo de Barre, who bore De Coucy's standard on the right, and with whom he had become a great favourite ; and sometimes jesting with Gallon the Fool, whose regard he strove not a little to cultivate, though it was not less difficult to ascertain exactly which way the cracked juggler's esteem turned, than it was to win his affection at all, which was no easy task.

“Haw, haw ! Sire Jodelle !” cried Gallon, coming close to him, as they began to move forward towards Tours —“Haw, haw ! A goodly body of prisoners our lord has taken to-day !” and he pointed to the band of knights which had so lately joined their own. “And yet,” added Gallon, bringing his two eyes to bear with a sly leer upon Jodelle's face, “our lord does not often make prisoners. He contents himself with dashing his foemen's brains out with his battle-axe, as he did in Auvergne.”

Jodelle grasped his sword, and muttered something to himself. Gallon's eyes, however, were like the orbs in an orrery, for an instant close together, and then, by some unapparent machinery, thrown far apart ; and before Jodelle could determine what their first expression meant, they were straggling out again on each side of the head in which they were placed, and the shrewd meaning leer was changed at once into the most broad senseless vacancy.

“Oh ! it would have done your heart good, Sire Jodelle,” continued the jongleur, “to see how he hewed

their noddles.—Haw, haw! Oh, rare!—But, as I was saying,” continued he, in his flighty, rambling way, “yours must be a merry trade, and a thriving.”

“Ours is no trade, Maitre Gallon,” replied Jodelle, speaking calmly, to conceal no very amicable sensations which he felt towards the jongleur;—“ours is no trade; ‘tis a profession,—the noble profession of arms.”

“No trade!” exclaimed Gallon.—“Haw, haw! Haw, haw! If you make no trade of it, with such merchandise as you have, you are not fit to hold a sow by the ear, or soap a cat’s tail. Why! Do you not buy and sell?”

“Buy and sell!” said Jodelle, pondering. “Faith! I am heavy this morning. What should I buy or sell, either?”

“Lord now! Lord now!” cried Gallon, holding up both his hands. “To think that there is another man in all the world so stupid as my master and myself!—What should you buy and sell? Why what better merchandise would you desire to sell to King John,” he added, making his horse sidle up against the chief of the Brabançois, so that he could speak without being overheard by any one else,—“what better merchandise would you desire to sell to King John, than that fat flock of sheep before you, with the young ram and his golden fleece at the head of them;—and what would you desire better to buy, than white English silver and yellow English gold?”

Jodelle looked in his face, to see if he could gather any thing from that; but all was one flat, dead blank; even his very nose was still and meaningless—one might as well have expected such words of devilish cunning from a stone wall.

“But my oath—my honour!” cried Jodelle, gazing on him still.

“Your oath!—Haw, haw!” shouted Gallon, convulsed with laughter,—“your honour!—Haw, haw! haw, haw! haw, haw!” And rolling about as if he would have fallen from his horse, he galloped on, shouting, and roaring, and laughing, and screaming, till there

was not a man in the army did not turn his head to look at the strange being who dared to interrupt with such obstreperous merriment their leader's conversation.

De Coucy well knew the sounds, and turned to chide ; but Arthur, who had been before amused with Gallon's humour, called him to approach for the purpose of jesting with him, with that boyish susceptibility of absurdities which characterized the age.

Gallon was as much at his ease among princes and barons as among peasants and serving-men ; and, seeming to forget all that he had just done speaking of, he dashed off into some new train of eccentricity better suited to his auditors.

Jodelle, who, trembling for the result, had so far forgot himself as to ride on to listen, now rendered secure by the juggler's flighty change of topic, dropped back into the rear, and the whole cavalcade moved gently on to Tours.

While preparing for the prince's banquet in the evening, the place at De Coucy's elbow was filled by Gallon the Fool, who, somewhat in a more sane and placable humour than usual, amused his lord with various tales and anecdotes, neither so disjointed nor so disfigured as his relations usually were. The last, however, which he thought fit to tell—what he had overheard through the unglazed window of the hermit's cell on the night before the party of Arthur quitted Paris, caused De Coucy instantly to write a few words to the Count d'Auvergne, and putting it in the hands of his page, he bade him ride for his life, and deliver the letter wherever he should find the count, were it even in the presence of the king himself. The fatigued state of the horses prevented the lad from setting out that night, but by daylight next morning he was in the saddle, and away upon a journey which we may have cause to trace more particularly hereafter.

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER a long consultation with De Coucy, the morning following their arrival at Tours, Arthur Plantagenet proceeded to hold his first regular council of war. Endowed with a thousand graces of person and of mind, Arthur had still that youthful indecision of character, that facility of yielding, which leads the lad so often to do what the man afterward bitterly repents of.

Arthur entered the council-room of the bishop's palace at Tours, fully determined to adhere to the more prudent plan of waiting for the large reinforcements he expected. He took his seat with the proud dignity of a Plantagenet; and though his youthful countenance was in feature and in complexion almost feminine, and his brows were only ornamented with the ducal coronet of Brittany, still, in port and expression, he was every inch a king. There was a dead silence among the knights for a moment or two after he had entered, while Arthur spoke a few words to the Bishop of Tours, who stood on the right-hand of the large throne or chair in which he was seated. The prince then turned towards the council; and, with somewhat of a heightened colour, but with a clear tone and unembarrassed manner, he spoke.

"Illustrious Lords," he said, "whose valour and wisdom have gained Poitou and Anjou a name with the whole world; as your inferior both in age and reason, in warlike experience and in prudent sagacity, I come to you for advice and counsel, how to carry forward the great enterprise I have undertaken. We are here, not much above a hundred knights; and our whole forces do not amount to two thousand men; while John, my usurping uncle, is within a few days' march, with ten times our number of men, and full two thousand valiant

and renowned knights. To balance this disparity, however, King Philip, my noble and bountiful god-father in arms, has given me, for my auxiliaries and allies, Hervey de Donzy, Count de Nevers, surnamed the Blur, the valiant Hugues de Dampierre, with all the knights of Berri, and Imbert Baron de Beaujeu, with many a noble baron from the other side of the Loire. These knights arrive to-day at Orleans, and in three days will be here. At the same time, my dutchy of Brittany, so faithful to me in all times, sends me five hundred valiant knights, and four thousand men-at-arms, who to-morrow at the latest will be at Nantes. It seems to me, therefore, the wisest plan we can pursue—if you, whose wisdom and experience are greater than mine, do not think otherwise—to remain here at least four days. Often a short delay produces the greatest benefit; and a wise man of antiquity has said, that it is not the evils which happen that we should struggle to avoid, but those that may happen. Let us also remember, that—though, Heaven knows! no one, or old or young, shall in open warfare more expose his person than I will do; or less cares for life than I do, if it be not life with honour;—but still let us remember, that it is my person alone my uncle seeks, because I demand my kingdom and the freedom of my imprisoned sister.* You all know his cruelty, and I call Heaven to witness, that I would rather, now, each man here should sheath his dagger in my body, than suffer me to fall into the hands of my bloody and unnatural relation.

“ By letters received last night from the good King Philip, I am informed that John has just seized upon the citadel of Dol, the garrison of which he has put to death after their surrender, the soldiers by the sword, the knights he has crucified. The king also assures me, that the usurper is marching hitherward, with all haste; and further counsels me to conduct myself with prudence rather than rashness; and to wait the arrival of the reinforcements, which will give me a disposable

* Eleanor Plantagenet, who was detained till her death, to cut off all chance of subsequent heirs in the line of Geoffrey Plantagenet, John's elder brother.

force of fifteen hundred knights and thirty thousand men."

Arthur paused; and Savary de Mauléon instantly replied:—"Let not the counsels of any one alarm you, beau sire. To cowards be delay; to men of courage action. John is marching towards us. Let him come; we shall be glad to see him for once show a spark of valour. No, no, beau sire, he will not come. Does he not always fly from the face of arms? He is a coward himself, and the spirit of the prince spreads always through the army. For us, be quick and decided action; and before this weak and treacherous usurper shall know even that we are in the field, let us strike some blow that shall carry panic to his fearful heart. His bad and wicked mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, is even now shut up in the town and castle of Mirebeau. The garrison is not large, though commanded by William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury. Let us hasten thither instantly, besiege the castle; and before John shall have notice of our movements, his mother, the instigator and abetter of one-half his wickedness, shall be in our power. Or even say that the castle holds out, our reinforcements may join us there, as well as here, and then success is certain."

The multitude of voices that applauded this proposal drowned all opposition; and though De Coucy pressed but for the delay of a day, to wait the arrival of his own forces, levied in the king's name on the lands of the Count de Tankerville, and which alone would have doubled their present numbers, both of knights and of servants-of-arms, his proposition was negatived. Arthur yielded to the current; and catching the ardour of the Poitevins, his eyes sparkled at the idea of surprising Mirebeau, and holding captive that bad queen who had been the incessant persecutor of his mother, and had acted but the part of a stepdame even to her own son, his father.

De Coucy saw that further opposition was vain, and bent the whole energies of his mind to ensure success, even to the scheme he had disapproved.

The knights and barons of Poitou had reasonably enough wondered to see a young warrior, whose greatest fame had been gained by the very rashness of his courage, become the counsellor of caution and delay; but De Coucy was rash only of his own person, holding that a knight ought never even to consider his own individual life, or that of his followers; but should give the whole thought and prudence which he abstracted from himself to carry forward successfully the object of his undertaking.

He never once dreamed of personal danger; nor could he conceive the idea of any man bestowing a thought upon the hazard to which any enterprise exposed him: and thus, in contemplating an approaching struggle, the whole powers of his mind were bent upon conquering his enemies, and his care for himself was only as a means to that effect.

If the wonder of the knights of Poitou had been excited by De Coucy's former slowness in counselling enterprise, it was far, far more so to behold his activity and energy now that action had really commenced.

He became suddenly, as it were, the soul and spirit of their enterprise; his eye was every where; his quick and capable mind seemed continually acting on every side around them. Whatever tidings was demanded of any part of their disjointed force, it was Sir Guy de Coucy knew;—whatever information was required concerning the country before them, De Coucy had already made himself master of it;—whatever movement was to be made by any body of the troops, De Coucy saw it done;—whatever provision was to be brought in for the supply of the army, De Coucy assured himself that it was executed, as far as the brief time permitted. He had recommended delay; but as action had been decided upon, he put forth the whole energetic activity of his soul to render action effective.

Understanding thoroughly the character and application of all the various classes of troops made use of in that day, De Coucy took care that his Brabançois should

be turned to that service for which they were best calculated. As reconnoitring parties they were invaluable; and, as the army advanced upon Mirebeau, by spreading them over the face of the country, he gained information of every thing that was passing around.

Two messengers from Eleanor of Aquitaine to her son were thus intercepted; and it was discovered from the letters they bore, that she had already obtained knowledge of Arthur's movements, and beseeched John to hasten to her relief; telling him, that though the castle she held might be looked upon as nearly impregnable, yet the suddenness of attack had prevented her from providing for the garrison, sufficiently, at least, for any long siege.

Such news was not lost on De Coucy; and employing his Brabançois as marauders, in which point of duty they certainly did not fail, he swept the whole country round about of every sort of provisions, both to distress the enemy and to supply his own troops. This service became one of danger as they approached nearer to the town, the parties of William Longsword being also scattered about on the same errand; and the whole of the morning before their arrival was spent in fierce and continual skirmishes,—now for a drove of bullocks,—now for a cart of wine,—now for a load of wheat.

At length, all the parties of Normans and English were driven within the gates of the town; and the army of Arthur, sitting down before it, invested it on all sides.

We must remember, however, that what were called towns in those days might consider it a high honour to be compared even to a small English borough of the present times; so that it was no impossible thing for an army of two thousand men to invest even a town and castle.

A council of war was instantly held, and De Coucy's voice was no longer for delay. Immediate attack of the town was his advice; and though many observed that only four hours of daylight remained, he still pressed

his object, declaring that, if well seconded, he would place his standard in the market-place before dark. Those who had before reproached him with procrastination, dared not oppose him now, and orders were instantly issued for the attack of the walls.

The whole space occupied by the houses of Mirebeau was encompassed by a strong curtain of rough stone, flanked with tall round towers, at the distance of an arrow's flight from each other; so that every part of the wall, though unguarded by a ditch, could be defended, not only from its own projecting battlements, but by the cross fire of missiles from the towers. Both men and munition of war seemed plenty within; for, on the first symptoms of a general attack, the walls became thronged with slingers and bowmen; and numbers of labourers might be seen lighting fires for boiling oil or water, or carrying up baskets of heavy stones, logs of wood, and quantities of quick-lime, to cast down upon the assailants' heads, and crush them, or blind them, if the flights of arrows proved insufficient to keep them from the gates or the foot of the wall.

The defenders of the battlements, indeed, appeared to be principally burghers mingled with a small proportion of soldiers from the castle; but, although the military citizen was but little esteemed in that day, there was a degree of bustle and promptitude about those who manned the wall of Mirebeau, which, at all events, indicated zeal in its defence.

The preparations on the part of the besiegers were not less active; and Arthur did all that an inexperienced youth could do to give unity and consistence to the efforts of his undisciplined and insubordinate forces. It must not, however, be thought that we would say the knights who accompanied him were less regular and obedient than others of their times and class. Far from it. But it must be remembered, that discipline was almost unknown among the armies of chivalry, and that the feudal system was felt as much, or more, in times of war, than in times of peace. Each baron commanded the knights and men-at-arms he brought

into the field. It is true, he received himself commands from the sovereign, or the person who represented him for the moment: but whether he obeyed those commands or not depended upon a thousand circumstances; as, whether the monarch was himself respected,—whether the orders he gave were to be executed beneath his own eye,—and, lastly, whether they suited the taste, or coincided with the opinion, of the person who received them.

In the case of Arthur, every one who followed him thought they had a right, not only to counsel, but to act; and the prince himself, afraid of opposing them, lest they should fall from him before the arrival of the reinforcements placed by Philip more absolutely under his command, could only retain the external appearance of authority, by sanctioning what they themselves proposed.

The tumultuary council held upon the occasion passed in rapid interjections to somewhat of the following tenor. “Let us divide into three bodies!—Each leader attack a gate.—Hugues le Brun, I join myself to you.—We will to the southern door.—I attack that postern.—Sire de Mauléon, where do you attack?—I undertake the great gate; that is, if the beau Sire Arthur so commands.”

“Certainly, beau sire! I think it will be advisable; but, at all events, let the various attacks be simultaneous,” replied the Prince: “let some signal be given when all are ready.”

“True, true! Well bethought, beau sire! You are an older warrior than any of us.—Sire de Coucy, where do you attack? I see your men are busy about mantlets and pavisses.”

“I attack that tower,” replied De Coucy, pointing to one that, though tall and strong, seemed somewhat more ancient than the wall.

“Ha! you would add another tower to those in your chief,” said Savary de Mauléon; “but you will fail. We have no ladders. Better come with me to the gate. Well, as you will.—Sire Geoffroy de Lusignan, speed

round with your force, and shoot up a lighted arrow when you are ready.—Where do you bestow yourself, beau Sire Arthur?"

"If the prince will follow my counsel," said Hugues le Brun, "he will hover round with the men-at-arms which were given him by the king, and bestow his aid wherever he sees it wanted."

"Or keep on that high ground," said Geoffroy de Lusignan, "and send your commands to us, according as you see the action turn."

Arthur bowed his head; and all the knights rode off towards the different points they had chosen for their attack, except De Coucy—the tower he had marked being exactly opposite the spot where they had held their council, if such it could be called.

"They would fain prevent my fighting," said Arthur, turning to De Coucy, and speaking still in a low voice, as if fearful of some one hearing, who might oppose his purpose; "but they will be mistaken.—Sire de Coucy, I pray you, as good knight and true, let me fight under your honourable banner."

"To your heart's content, my prince," replied the knight. "By Heaven! I would not keep you from the noble game before us, for very shame's sake!—Hugo de Barre, put foot to the ground, with all my squires, and advance the mantlets.—Have you the pickaxes and the piles all ready?"

"All is ready, beau sire," replied the squire; "store of axes and of iron bars."

"Advance then!" cried the knight, springing to the ground. "Captain Jodelle, dismount your men, and cover us under your arrows as we advance."

"But the signal has not been given from the other side," said Arthur. "Had you not better wait, Sir Guy?"

"We have more to do than they have," replied the knight; "and besides, they having left us, and we beginning the attack, the Normans will think ours a false one, and will not repel us so vigorously, more especially as we direct our efforts against a tower instead of a

gate; but they are deceived. I see a crevice there in the very base of the wall, that will aid us shrewdly.—Stay here, beau sire, till I return, and then we will in together."

"Oh! Sire de Coucy," cried the noble youth, "you are going to fight without me.—Do not! do not deceive me, I pray you!"

"On my honour, gallant prince," said De Coucy, grasping his hand, "I will not strike a stroke, except against stone walls, till you strike beside me;" and he advanced to the spot where Hugo de Barre and three other of his men held up an immense heavy screen of woodwork, just within bowshot of the walls. Four more of the knight's men stood underneath this massy defence, holding all sorts of instruments for mining the wall, as well as several strong piles of wood, and bundles of fagots. As soon as De Coucy joined them, the whole began to move on; and Jodelle's Brabançois, advancing at a quick pace, discharged a flight of arrows at the battlements of the tower, which apparently, by the bustle it occasioned, was not without some effect. An instant answer of the same kind was given from the walls, and missiles of all kinds fell like a thick shower of hail.

In the mean while, Arthur stood on the mound, with some ten or fifteen men-at-arms, who had been placed near him as a sort of body-guard by Philip. From thence he could behold several points destined to be attacked, and see the preparations of more than one of the leaders for forcing the gates opposite to which they had stationed themselves. But his chief attention still turned towards De Coucy, who was seen advancing rapidly under the immense mantlet of wood he had caused to be constructed, on which the arrows, the bolts, and the stones from the slings fell in vain. On, on, it bore to the very foot of the tower; but then came, on the part of the besieged, the more tremendous sort of defence, of hurling down large stones and trunks of trees upon it; so that, more than once, the four strong men by whom it was supported tottered under

the weight, and Hugo de Barre himself fell upon his knee.

This last accident, however, proved beneficial; for the inclined position thus given to the mantlet caused the immense masses that had been cast down upon it, to roll off; and the squire rose from his knee with a lightened burden. In the mean time, Jodelle and his companions did good and soldierlike service. It was almost in vain that the defenders of the tower shouted for fresh implements to crush the besiegers. Not a man could show himself for an instant on the walls, but an arrow from the bows of the Brabançois struck him down, or rattled against his armour; and thus the supply of fresh materials was slow and interrupted. In the mean while, De Coucy and his squires laboured without remission at the foundation of the tower. A large crack, with which the sure sapping hand of Time had begun to undermine the wall, greatly facilitated their purpose; and, at every well-aimed and steady blow which De Coucy directed with his pickaxe at the joints of the mortar, some large mass of masonry rolled out, and left a widening breach in the very base of the tower.

At this moment the signal for the general assault was given, from the other side of the town, by an arrow tipped with lighted tow being shot straight up into the air; and in a moment the whole plain rang with the shouts and cries of the attack and defence.

Arthur could not resist the desire to ride round, for a moment, and see the progress of the besiegers in other points; and animated with the sight of the growing strife, the clanging of the trumpets, and the war-cries of the combatants, his very heart burned to join his hand in the fray, and win at least some part of the honour of the day. De Coucy, however, was his only hope in this respect; and galloping back as fast as he could, after having gazed for a moment at the progress of each of the other parties, he approached so near the point where the knight was carrying on his operations, that the arrows from the wall began to ring

against his armour. Arthur's heart beat joyfully at the very feeling that he was in the battle ; but a sight now attracted his attention which engrossed all his hopes and fears, in anxiety for the noble knight who was there labouring in his behalf.

The masses of wall which De Coucy and his followers had detached had left so large a gap in the solid foundation of the tower, that it became necessary to support it with the large piles of wood to prevent the whole structure from crushing them beneath its fall, while they pursued their labours. This had just been done, and De Coucy was still clearing away more of the wall, when suddenly a knight, who seemed to have been informed of what was passing, appeared on the battlements of the tower, followed by a number of stout yeomen, pushing along an immense instrument of wood, somewhat like one of the cranes used in loading and unloading vessels. From a higher lever above, hung down the whole trunk of a large tree, tipped at the end with iron ; this was brought immediately over the spot where De Coucy's mantlet concealed himself and his followers from the lesser weapons of the besieged, and, at a sign from the knight, the lever slowly raised the immense engine in the air.

"Have a care !—have a care ! Sire de Coucy !" shouted at once the whole troop of Brabançois, as well as Arthur's men-at-arms. But before their cry could well reach the knight, or be understood, the lever was suddenly loosed, and the ponderous mass of wood fell with its iron-shod point upon the mantlet, dashing it to pieces. Hugo de Barre was struck down, with four of the other squires ; but De Coucy himself, who was actually in the mine he had dug, with three more of his followers, who were close to the wall, remained untouched. Hugo, however, instantly sprang upon his feet again, but little injured, and three of his companions followed his example ; the fourth remained upon the field for ever.

"Back, Hugo !—Back to the prince, all of you !" cried De Coucy.—"Give me the light, and back!"

The squires obeyed; and having placed in the knight's hand a resin torch which was by this time nearly burnt out, they retreated towards the Brabançois, under a shower of arrows from the walls, which, sped from a good English bow, in more than one instance pierced the lighter armour of De Coucy's squires, and left marks that remained till death. In the mean while, not a point of De Coucy's arnour, as he moved to and fro at the foot of the tower, that was not the mark of an arrow or a quarrel; while the English knight above animated his men to every exertion, to prevent him from completing what he had begun.

“A thousand crowns to him who strikes him down!” cried he.—“Villains! cast the stones upon him! On your lives, let him not fire those fagots! or the tower and the town are lost.—Give me an arblast;” and as he spoke, the knight snatched a crossbrow from one of the yeomen, dressed the quarrel in it, and aimed steadily at the bars of De Coucy's helmet as he bore forward another bundle of fagots and jammed it into the mine.

The missile struck against one of the bars, and bounded off. “Well aimed! William of Salisbury!” cried De Coucy, looking up. “For ancient love, my old companion in arms, I tell thee to get back from the tower! for within three minutes it is down!” And so saying, he applied his torch to various parts of the pile of wood he had heaped up in the breach, and retired slowly towards Prince Arthur, with the arrows rattling upon his armour like a heavy shower of hail upon some well-roofed building.

“Now, my noble lord,” cried he, “down from your horse, and prepare to rush on! By Heaven's grace! you shall be the first man in Mirebeau; for I hear by the shouts that the others have not forced the gates yet.—Hugo, if thou art not badly hurt with that arrow, range the men behind us.—By the Lord! William of Salisbury will stay till the tower falls!—See! they are trying to extinguish the fire by casting water over, but it is in vain; the pillars have caught the flame. Hark, how they crack!”

As De Coucy spoke, the Earl of Salisbury and his men, seeing that the attempt to put out the fire was useless, retired from the tower. The flame gradually consumed the heaps of loose wood and fagots with which the knight had filled the mine; and the strong props of wood with which he had supported the wall as he worked, ~~had~~ caught fire, one after the other, and blazed with intense fury. The besiegers and the besieged watched alike in breathless expectation, as the fire wore away the strength of the wood. Suddenly one of the props gave way; but only a mass of heated masonry followed. Another broke—the tower tottered—the others snapped short with the weight—the falling mass seemed to balance itself in the air, and struggle, like an overthrown king, to stand for but a moment longer—then down it rushed, with a sound like thunder, and lay a mass of smoking ruins on the plain.

“On! on!” cried De Coucy; “charge before the dust subsides! A Coucy! a Coucy!—St. Michael! St. Michael!” and in an instant he was standing with Prince Arthur by his side, in the midst of the breach which the fall of the tower had made in the wall and half-way up the sort of causeway formed by its ruins. They passed not, however, unopposed, for William Longsword instantly threw himself before them.

“Up! Prince Arthur! up!” cried De Coucy; “you must be the first.—Set your foot on my knee;” and he bent it to aid the young prince in climbing a mass of broken wall that lay before him. Arthur sprang up, sword in hand, amid the smothering cloud of dust and smoke that still hung above the ruins, and his weapon was instantly crossed with that of his uncle, William of Salisbury, his father’s natural brother. At the same moment, De Coucy rushed forward and struck down two of the Norman soldiers who opposed his passage; but then paused, in order not to abandon Arthur to an old and experienced knight, far more than his match in arms.

For five blows, and their return, De Coucy suffered the prince to maintain the combat himself, *to win his*

spurs, as he mentally termed it. The sixth stroke, however, of William of Salisbury's tremendous sword fell upon Arthur's shoulder; and though the noble lad sturdily bore up, and was not even brought upon his knee, yet the part of his armour where the blow fell flew into shivers with its force. The earl lifted his sword again; and Arthur, somewhat dizzied and confused, made a very faint movement to parry it; but instantly De Coucy rushed in, and received the edge of the weapon on his shield.

“Nobly fought! my prince!” cried he, covering Arthur with one arm, and returning William Long-sword's blow with the other,—“nobly fought, and knightly done!—Push in with your men-at-arms, and the Brabançois, and leave this one to me.—Now, Salisbury, old friend, we have stood side by side in Palestine. I love thee as well face to face. Thou art a noble foe. There stands my foot!”

“Brave Coucy! Thou shalt have thy heart's content!” cried the earl, dealing one of his sweeping blows at the knight's neck. But he had now met with his equal; and, indeed, so powerful was each of the champions, so skilful in the use of their weapons, and so cool in their contention, that the combat between them was long and undecided. Blow answered blow with the rapidity of lightning: stroke followed stroke. Their arms struck fire, the crests were shorn from their helmets, the bearings effaced from their shields, and their surcoats of arms became as tattered as a beggar's gown.

Still, though De Coucy pressed him with impetuous fury, William of Salisbury yielded not a step; and it was only when he saw his followers driven back by the superior number of the Brabançois and men-at-arms led by Arthur, that he retired a pace or two, still dealing blows thick and fast at De Coucy; who followed foot by foot, shouting his battle-cry, and encouraging the men to advance; while, every now and then, he addressed some word of friendly admiration to his opponent, even in the midst of the deadly strife that he urged so furiously against him.

“Thou art a good knight, on my soul, Lord Salisbury!” cried he; “yet take that for the despatch of this affair!” and he struck him with the full sway of his blade, on the side of his head, so that the earl reeled as he stood.

“Gramercy!” cried William, recovering his equipoise, and letting a blow fall on the knight’s casque, not inferior in force to the one he had received.

At that moment, however, his troops gave way still farther before the Brabançois; and at the same time a party of the burghers came rushing from another part of the town, crying, “The gate is lost! the gate is lost!—we saw it dashed in!”

“Then the town is lost too,” said Salisbury coolly.—“Sound a retreat!” he continued, turning his head slightly to a squire who stood behind him, watching lest he should be struck down, but forbidden by all the laws of war to interpose between two knights, so long as they could themselves maintain the combat. At the same time, while the squire, as he had been bidden, sounded a retreat on his horn, William Longsword still continued to oppose himself to the very front of the enemy; and not till his men were clear, and in full retreat towards the castle, did he seek to escape himself, though he in a degree quitted the personal combat with De Coucy, to cover with some of his bravest men-at-arms the rear of the rest. Now, he struck a blow here; now felled a Brabançois there; now, returned for an instant to De Coucy; and now, rushed rapidly to restore order among his retreating troops.

As they quitted the walls, however, and got embarrassed in the streets of the town, the Norman soldiers were every moment thrown into more and more confusion, by the various parties of the burghers who had abandoned the walls, and were flying towards the castle for shelter. Several knights also, and men-at-arms, were seen retreating up the high streets, from the gate which had been attacked by Savary de Mauléon; just at the moment that De Coucy, rushing on into the market-place, caught his standard from the hands of

Hugo de Barre, and stuck it into the midst of the great fountain of the town.

The flight of the knights showed sufficiently to Lord Salisbury, that the gate which they had been placed to defend had been forced also ; and his sole care became now to get his men as speedily and as safely within the walls of the castle as possible. This was not so difficult to do ; for though De Coucy and Arthur still hung upon his rear with the men-at-arms and a part of the Brabançois, a great majority of the latter, giving way to their natural inclination, dispersed to pursue their ancient avocation of plundering.

A scene of no small horror presented itself at the gates of the castle. Multitudes of the burghers, with their women and children, had crowded thither for safety ; but Eleonor, with the most pitiless cruelty, ordered the garrison to drive them back with arrows, and not to suffer one to enter on pain of death. Their outstretched hands, their heartrending cries, were all in vain ; the queen was inexorable ; and more than one had been wounded with the arrows, who had dared to approach the barbican.

When Salisbury and his band came near, however, the multitude, driven to despair by seeing the pursuers following fiercely on his track, made a universal rush to enter along with him ; and it was only by using their swords against the townsmen, and even the women, that the soldiers could clear themselves a passage.

Salisbury was of course the last who passed himself ; and as he turned to enter, while his soldiers formed again within the barbican, two women, of the highest class of the townspeople, clung to his knees, entreating him by all that may move man's heart, to let them follow within the walls.

"I cannot !—I must not !" exclaimed he harshly ; but then, turning once more, he shouted to De Coucy, who, seeing that further pursuit was vain, now followed more slowly.

"Sire de Coucy !" he exclaimed, as if he had been speaking to his dearest friend. "If you love me, pro-

tect this helpless crowd as much as may be. For old friendship's sake, I pray thee!"

"I will, Salisbury, I will!" replied De Coucy.—"Beau Sire Arthur, have I your permission?"

"Do what thou wilt, dear friend and noble knight," replied the prince. "Is there any thing you could ask me now, that I would not grant?"

"Stand back then, ho!" cried the knight, waving his hand to the Brabançois, who were pressing forward towards the trembling crowd of burghers.—"Stand back! Who passes that mark is my foe!" and he cast his gauntlet on the ground in the front of the line.

"We will not be balked of our spoil. The purses of the burghers are ours!" cried several of the free companions; and one sprang forward from immediately behind De Coucy, and passed the bound he had fixed. That instant, however, the knight, without seeing or inquiring who he was, struck him a blow in the face with the pommel of his sword, that laid him rolling on the ground with the blood spouting from his mouth and nose. No one made a movement to follow; and Jodelle—for it was he—rose from the ground, and retired silently to his companions.

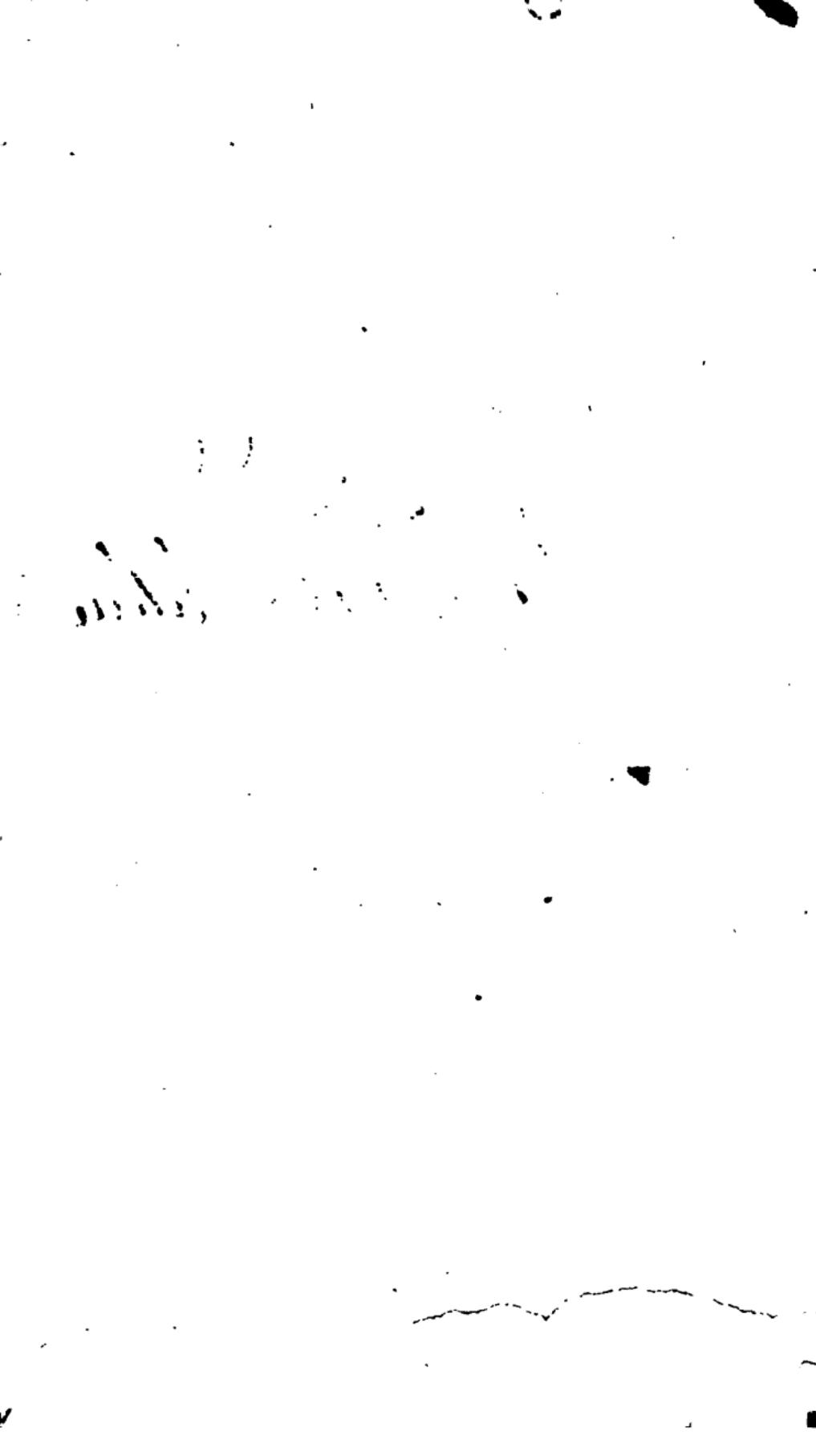
De Coucy then advanced with Prince Arthur towards the multitude crowding round the barbican. Immediately the soldiers on the walls bent their bows; but the voice of the Earl of Salisbury was heard exclaiming, "Whoever wings a shaft at him dies on the spot!" and De Coucy proceeded to tell the people, that they must, if they hoped to be spared, yield whatever gold or jewels they had about them to the soldiery; and that all such men as were not clerks, must agree to surrender themselves prisoners, and pay a fair ransom, such as should be determined afterward by the prince's council.

This matter was soon settled; the universal cry from the burghers being, in their extremity of fear, "Save our lives!—save our women's honour!—save our children!—and take gold, or whatever else we possess!" Each one instantly stripped himself of the wealth he

had about him ; and this, being collected in a heap, satisfied for the time the rapacity of the soldiers. De Coucy then took measures to secure the lives of the prisoners ; and putting them, by twos and threes, under the protection of the prince's men-at-arms and his own squires, he accompanied Arthur to the market-place, followed by the Brabançois, wrangling with each other concerning the distribution of the spoil, and seemingly forgetful of their disappointment in not having been permitted to add bloodshed to plunder.

In the market-place, beside De Coucy's standard, stood Savary de Mauléon, Geoffroy de Lusignan, and several other barons, with three Norman knights as prisoners. The moment De Coucy and Arthur approached, Savary de Mauléon advanced to meet them ; and with that generous spirit which formed one of the brightest points in the ancient knightly character, he pressed the former opponent of his counsels in his mailed arms, exclaiming, " By my faith, Sire de Coucy, thou hast kept thy word ! ' There stands thy banner, an hour before sunset ! ' and I proclaim thee, with the voice of all my companions, the lord of this day's fight."

" Not so, fair sir !" replied De Coucy,—" not so ! There is another to whom the honour justly belongs, —who first mounted the breach we made in the wall, —who first measured swords with the famous William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, and who, in short, has been the first in all this day's achievements.—Here he stands," continued the knight, turning towards the princely youth who stood beside him, blushing to his very brow, both with graceful embarrassment and gratified pride—" here he stands ! and may this conquest of Mirebeau be but the first of those that shall, step by step, give him his whole dominions.—Sound trumpets, sound !—Long life to Arthur, King of England !"



1866
Harper's Edition

